

HELLBOY

BY
STJEPAN
ŠEJIĆ

BOOK
ONE





BOOK ONE

STJEPAN ŠEJIĆ
STORY AND ART

GABRIELA DOWNIE
LETTERS

STJEPAN ŠEJIĆ
COVER AND VARIANT COVER

HARLEY QUINN CREATED BY
PAUL DINI AND **BRUCE TIMM**



AT FIRST IT SEEMS LIKE ANOTHER NIGHTMARE.

IN THIS DREAM I WALK A LONG, WINDING ROAD THROUGH A WARPED VERSION OF GOTHAM.

I'VE DREAMT OF THIS ROAD BEFORE. I'VE SEEN **THE TERRORS** THAT AWAIT ME AT ITS END.

AND YET, EVERY TIME, I KEEP WALKING.

EVERY TIME I THINK, **THIS TIME WILL BE DIFFERENT.**

AND THIS TIME, I'M **RIGHT.**



ANY OTHER NIGHT, THE MIST WOULD RISE AND A **GRINNING MONSTER** WOULD ERUPT OUT OF IT TO **DEVOUR ME.**

THIS NIGHT, THERE IS NO SINISTER LAUGHTER. NO MOUTH WITH TOO MANY TEETH SMILING HUNGRILY AT ME.

NO, THIS TIME IT'S JUST **THE BATS.**

THEY LOOK LIKE BATS, BUT IN MY DREAMING MIND THEY'RE **VULTURES.**



SUDDENLY I'M SURE OF ONE THING: SOMEONE IS ABOUT TO **DIE!**



THEY TAKE ME TO THE INEVITABLE PLACE...

...**THE END OF THE ROAD** WHERE SWIRLING MISTS RISE AND, LIKE EVERY OTHER TIME, **HE** IS THERE.

BUT THIS TIME IT'S DIFFERENT.

THIS TIME, THE MONSTER IS DIFFERENT...

I RUN TOWARD
THEM...

THE MAN ON
THE GROUND...

THE GIANT BEAST...

AND THE BATS.

IF A LARGE GROUP OF CROWS
GETS TO BE CALLED A *MURDER*,
THEN IN MY DREAM I THINK,
THIS IS A FEAST.

A FEAST OF BATS.

BUT HUNGRY THOUGH THEY ARE,
THEY DON'T ATTACK. INSTEAD
THEY *SCREAM*. THEY *LAUGH*.
AND THEY *CHEER*.

THEY WANT *HIM* TO
DO IT *FOR* THEM.

THE GREAT BEAST MUST
DRAW BLOOD. THE GREAT
BEAST MUST *KILL* FOR THE
FEAST TO BEGIN.

AND IN MY DREAM I
FEEL *GUILTY*. I FEEL
RESPONSIBLE.

KILL

KILL

KILL

KILL

KILL

AFTER ALL...HE
IS MY PATIENT.

LEAVE HIM
ALONE!

CAST HIM
AWAY!
HE IS
BEYOND
HELP.

NO!
I...
...I CAN
DO IT!

BE IT
ON YOUR
HANDS, THEN,
DOCTOR...

THE GREAT
BEAST LEAVES,
HIS BATS IN TOW.



THE AIR GROWS SILENT.

ARE YOU...

ARE YOU
OKAY?

YOU...

WHY DIDN'T
YOU RUN?

YOU WERE
SUPPOSED TO
RUN.

NOT
ANYMORE.

I AM *YOUR*
DOCTOR.

I'M HERE
TO *HELP*.

YES, THIS DREAM
IS DIFFERENT.

FOR THE FIRST TIME, HIS
FACE IS NOT MONSTROUS.

HE SMILES... AND I MAKE THE
WORST MISTAKE OF MY LIFE...

...I *SMILE BACK*.

THERE WAS A TIME WHEN I WOULD
THINK BACK ON THIS DREAM AND
FIGHT BACK A LAUGH.

THE WHOLE THING FELT LIKE ONE OF THOSE TRASHY
ROMANCE TALES WHERE A PLAIN, ORDINARY GIRL
MEETS MR. TALL, SEXY AND DANGEROUS. A BEAST
THAT SIMPLY NEEDS HER GENTLE TOUCH
AND A LITTLE BIT OF GUIDANCE.

IN THOSE STORIES, THE GIRL HELPS
THE BEAST REGAIN HIS HUMANITY...

IN THOSE STORIES, THE
BEAST *LOVES* THE GIRL...

I ASSURE YOU, MINE IS
NOT ONE SUCH STORY.

NO, MY STORY ENDED UP BEING
SOMETHING COMPLETELY
DIFFERENT.



MY STORY'S THE ONE WHERE THE GIRL
DANCES WITH THE DEVIL, AND HE TAKES
HER WITH HIM ON A LONG ROAD TO HELL.

THAT ROAD STARTS,
AS THEY OFTEN DO...



...WITH A GOOD INTENTION.

I MEAN, YOU GOTTA UNDERSTAND, DOCTOR, WE *ALL* HAD OUR BEST INTENTIONS GOING IN.

WE HAD A CODE! NO WOMEN, NO CHILDREN!

MICKEY AND I *SWORE* TO THAT...

I MEAN, WE WERE NOTHING BUT TWO AMPED-UP JACKASSES WITH MORE BALLS THAN BRAINS, BUT WE WEREN'T FUCKING *ANIMALS*.

FOR THE FIRST FEW MONTHS WE KEPT OUR PROMISE. IT WASN'T HARD. WE HAD THE INSURGENTS ON THE MOVE...

HELL, THE WAR SEEMED AS GOOD AS *WON*... BUT THAT'S THE THING. WHEN YOU GOT THE TECHNOLOGICAL SUPERIORITY, THE ENEMY *ADAPTS*.

PROPER TERM FOR IT WAS *GUERRILLA WARFARE*... WE CALLED IT THE *ROACH WAR*.

SEE, THEY WERE LIKE ROACHES CRAWLING FROM UNDERNEATH EVERY FUCKING ROCK. YOU COULD NEVER *GET RID OF THEM*.

SNEAK ATTACKS, BACK STABS...ON ONE OCCASION THEY EVEN POISONED OUR WATER SUPPLY.

A SIX-MONTH DEPLOYMENT STRETCHED INTO *THREE YEARS*...

ONE DAY MICKEY AND I WERE ON A BREAK, VISITING A LOCAL BAR.

LOOKING FOR SOME *ACTION*. DOCTOR, YOU UNDERSTAND...

THERE WAS THIS GIRL. SHE WAS EYEING MICKEY... SO I...I...

I KEPT *PUSHING* HIM. I MEAN, HOW MANY CHANCES DOES A GUY HAVE TO...PARDON MY FRENCH, BREAK OFF A PIECE OF ASS.

LITTLE BITCH HAD A *RAZOR*... OPENED MICKEY'S THROAT EAR TO EAR. SO I BROKE *MY OATH* THAT DAY. BLEW HER BRAINS OUT. EMPTIED THE WHOLE DAMNED CLIP.

SHIT LIKE THAT, IT SNAPS SOMETHING INSIDE OF YOU...

YOU START SEEING THE WORLD *DIFFERENTLY*...

WOMEN, CHILDREN...AT THE END OF THE DAY, THEY WERE *THEIR* WOMEN AND CHILDREN. EACH ONE OF THEM HIDING A RAZOR, A GUN, A FUCKING BOMB FOR ALL I KNEW...

IN A WAR ZONE, *EVERYONE* IS AN ENEMY!

WITHOUT HIM, I HAD TO BE CAREFUL. GREW EYES IN THE BACK OF MY HEAD.

MICKEY AND I...WE HAD EACH OTHER'S BACK, YOU KNOW?

TRAINED MYSELF TO SEE *THE MURDER* IN THEIR EYES.

I HAD TO GET THEM BEFORE THEY GOT ME.

SO WHAT ABOUT THE HOSPITAL?

THEIR HOSPITAL! THE CIVILIAN USE OF IT WAS A *FRONT*. THERE WERE OVER *SIXTY* COMBATANTS THERE! IT WAS *MY CHANCE*!

HELL, THEY SHOULD HAVE GIVEN ME A DAMNED *MEDAL*!

INSTEAD, I GOT A DISHONORABLE DISCHARGE AND AN ARREST, AND HERE I AM SPILLING EVERYTHING TO YOU, DOCTOR...

UH...



QUINZEL,
MR. MORRIS.
DR. QUINZEL.

TWO YEARS LATER.

MR. MORRIS *FAILED* TO MENTION THAT THE HOSPITAL HE OPENED FIRE ON ALSO HOUSED 24 INJURED CHILDREN. THERE WERE *NO SURVIVORS*.



EDUCATIONAL SYMPOSIUM:
Center for the Study of Criminal Psychology,
Gotham City.

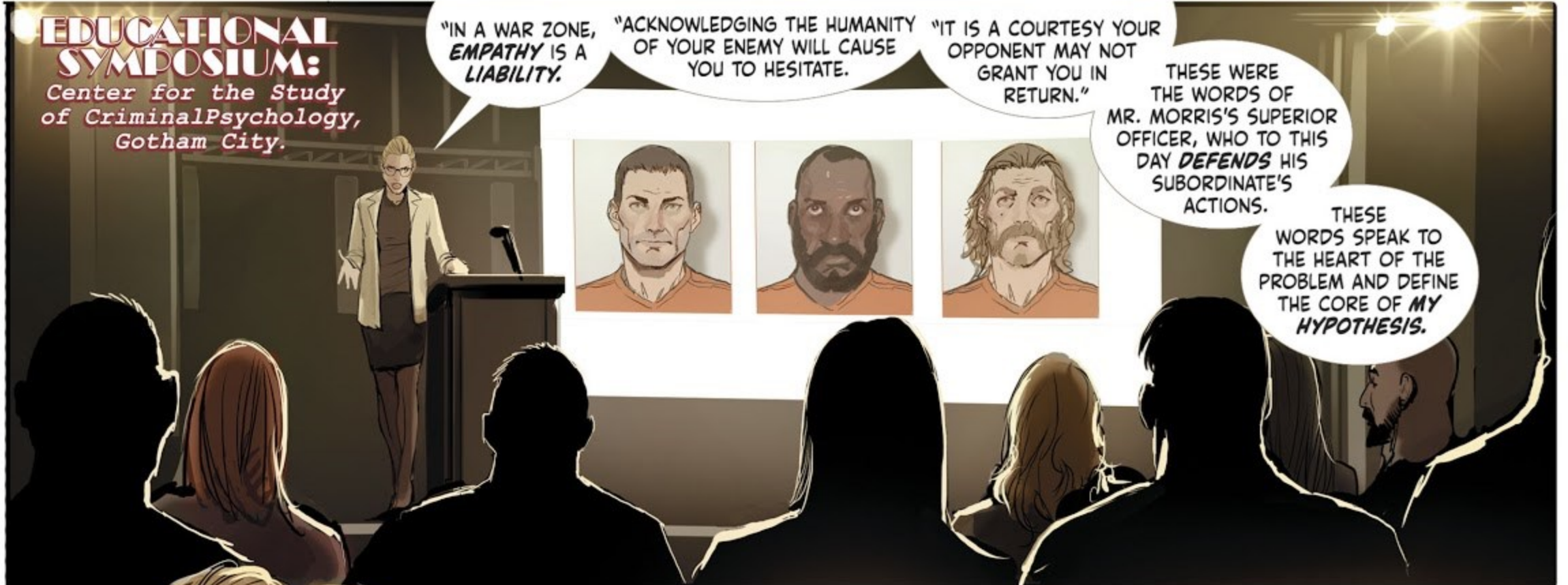
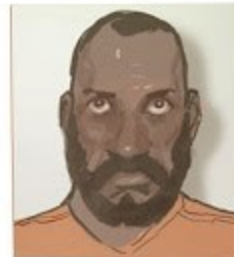
"IN A WAR ZONE, *EMPATHY* IS A *LIABILITY*."

"ACKNOWLEDGING THE HUMANITY OF YOUR ENEMY WILL CAUSE YOU TO HESITATE."

"IT IS A COURTESY YOUR OPPONENT MAY NOT GRANT YOU IN RETURN."

THESE WERE THE WORDS OF MR. MORRIS'S SUPERIOR OFFICER, WHO TO THIS DAY *DEFENDS* HIS SUBORDINATE'S ACTIONS.

THESE WORDS SPEAK TO THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM AND DEFINE THE CORE OF MY *HYPOTHESIS*.



FIGHT OR FLIGHT RESPONSE HAS LONG BEEN STUDIED, AND ITS UNDERLYING PROCESSES MAPPED.

IT IS AN INSTINCTIVE *REACTION* THAT *OVERRIDES* REGULAR BRAIN CHEMISTRY WHILE DAMPENING ONE'S ABILITY TO PROCESS EMPATHY.

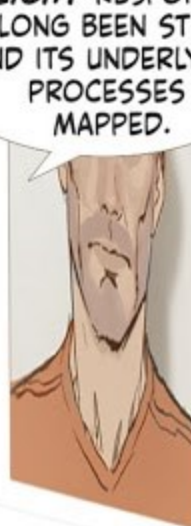
IN A WAR ZONE, THIS STATE OF HYPERAROUSAL CAN *SAVE LIVES*.

THIS INSTINCT IS A PART OF A *GREATER* MECHANISM.

A KIND OF A *MENTAL IMMUNE SYSTEM* DESIGNED TO PROTECT US FROM IMMINENT THREAT BY MANAGING BODY CHEMISTRY IN A WAY THAT MAXIMIZES OUR CHANCES OF SURVIVAL.

BUT WHAT IF THIS MECHANISM IS OVERUSED?

AND FOR EXTENDED PERIODS OF TIME?

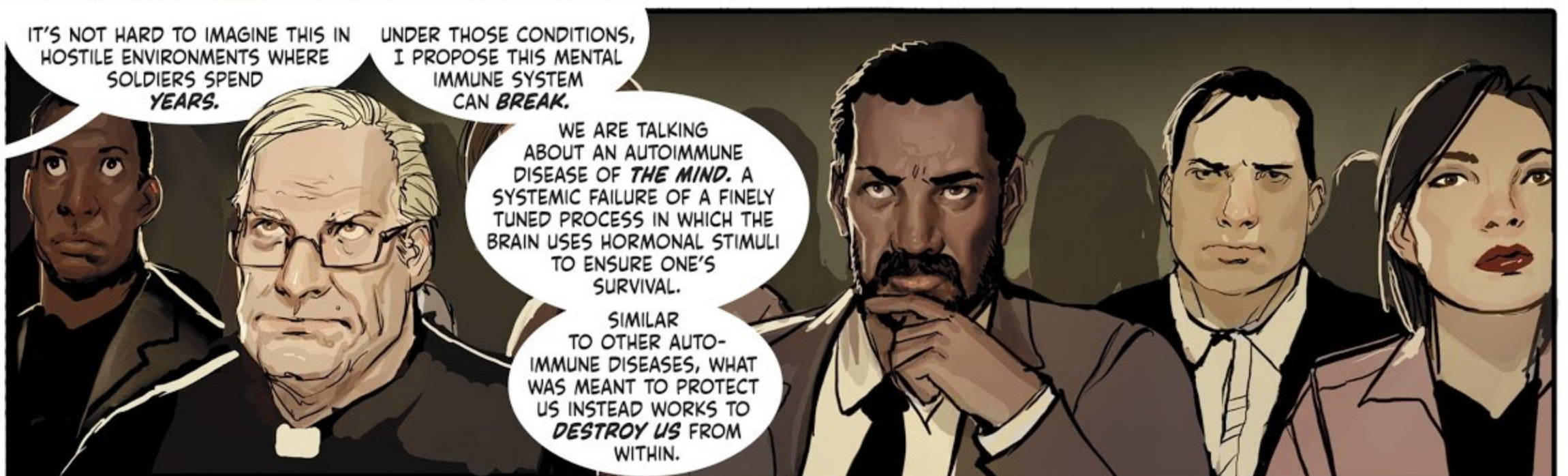


IT'S NOT HARD TO IMAGINE THIS IN HOSTILE ENVIRONMENTS WHERE SOLDIERS SPEND *YEARS*.

UNDER THOSE CONDITIONS, I PROPOSE THIS MENTAL IMMUNE SYSTEM CAN *BREAK*.

WE ARE TALKING ABOUT AN AUTOIMMUNE DISEASE OF *THE MIND*. A SYSTEMIC FAILURE OF A FINELY TUNED PROCESS IN WHICH THE BRAIN USES HORMONAL STIMULI TO ENSURE ONE'S SURVIVAL.

SIMILAR TO OTHER AUTO-IMMUNE DISEASES, WHAT WAS MEANT TO PROTECT US INSTEAD WORKS TO *DESTROY US* FROM WITHIN.



TO PUT IT
BLUNTLY, THIS MAY
RESULT IN **PERMANENT
DETERIORATION** OF
EMPATHY WHICH,
UH...

...WHICH
MIGHT LEAD
TO DEVELOPING
ANTISOCIAL
BEHAVIORS...

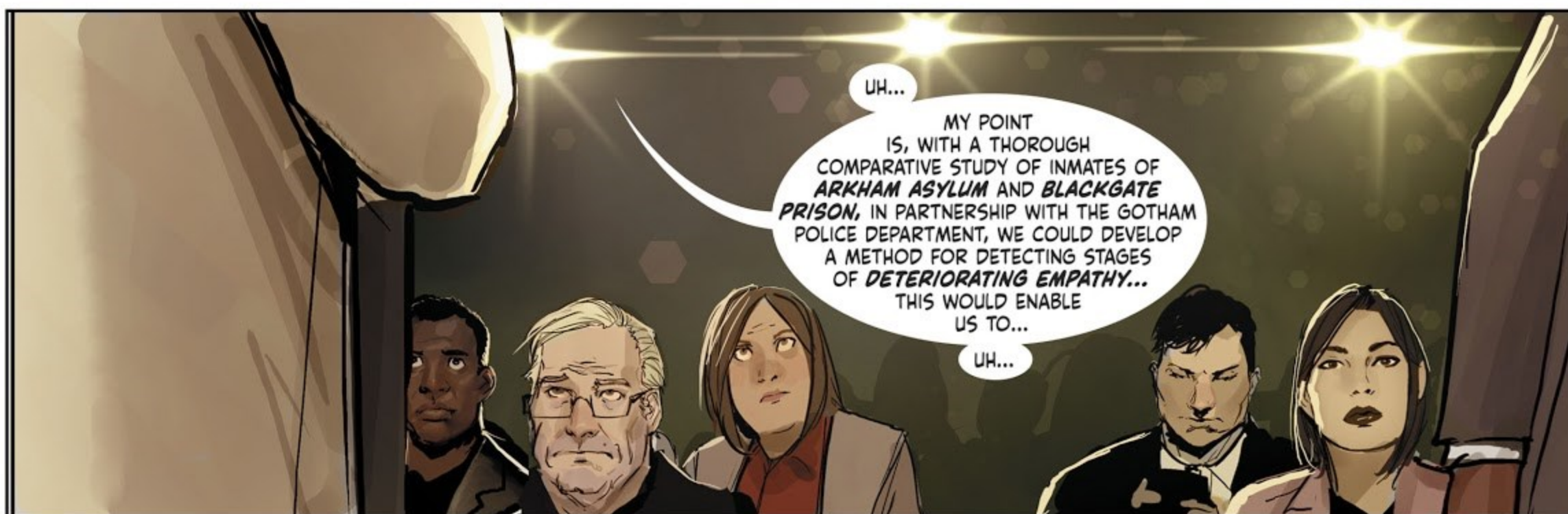
OF COURSE,
IDENTIFYING SUCH AN
AUTOIMMUNE DISEASE
IN A DISTANT WAR ZONE
IS UNLIKELY.

HOWEVER,
WE NEED LOOK
NO FURTHER FOR A
WAR ZONE THAN THE
**STREETS OF
GOTHAM**
ITSELF...

UH...

STATISTICS OF RECIDIVISM
STRONGLY INDICATE
THAT THERE IS A LARGE
ISSUE NOT ONLY WITH PETTY
CRIMINALS RELAPSING INTO
THE LIFE OF CRIME, BUT ALSO
WITH THE **INCREASING
SEVERITY** OF THOSE
CRIMES...

UM...
THAT...



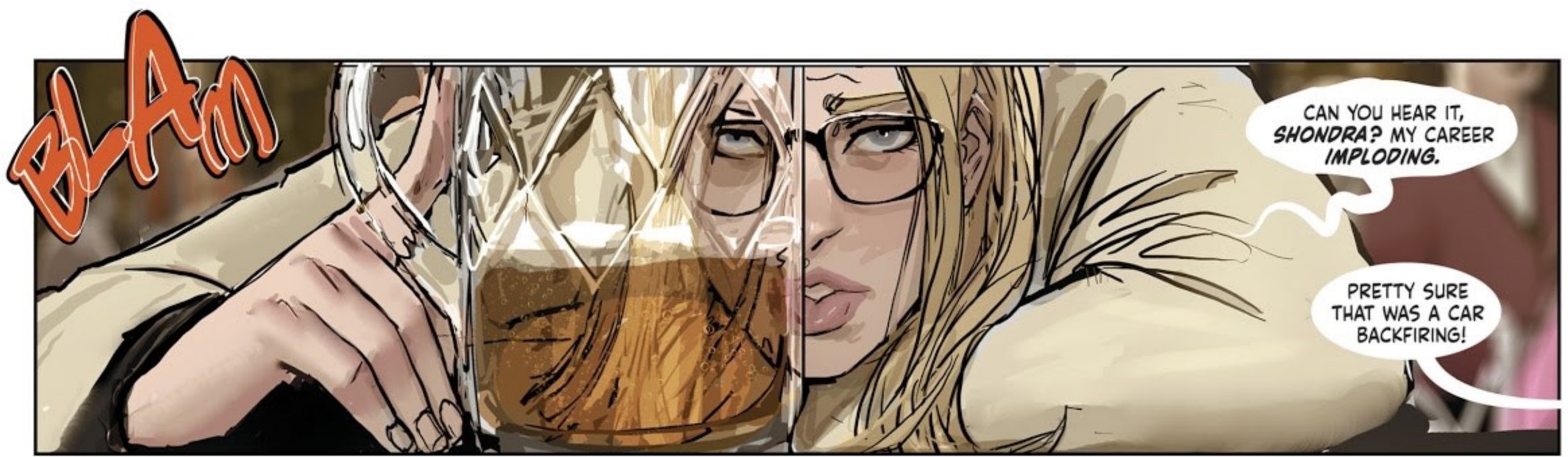
UH...

MY POINT
IS, WITH A THOROUGH
COMPARATIVE STUDY OF INMATES OF
ARKHAM ASYLUM AND **BLACKGATE
PRISON**, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE GOTHAM
POLICE DEPARTMENT, WE COULD DEVELOP
A METHOD FOR DETECTING STAGES
OF **DETERIORATING EMPATHY...**
THIS WOULD ENABLE
US TO...

UH...



...IDENTIFY
A SOCIOPATH IN THE
MAKING...



CAN YOU HEAR IT, SHONDRA? MY CAREER IMPLODING.

PRETTY SURE THAT WAS A CAR BACKFIRING!



I'M SERIOUS! I WASN'T EVEN HALF DONE AND THEY WERE ALREADY CHECKING THEIR WATCHES.

LET ME GUESS, YOU WENT ALL **BIG WORDS** ON THEM?

IT'S A SCIENTIFIC SYMPOSIUM...

I WASN'T GONNA EXPLAIN CRIMINAL PSYCHOLOGY WITH **HAND PUPPETS!**

HARLEY! THEY ARE **MONEY** PEOPLE! YOU BRING THE WHOLE PUPPET SHOW IF NEEDED.

"THIS IS **STAB ME ELMO** AND HE NEEDS SERIOUS THERAPY!"



SHONDRA, I'M **SOOOO** NOT IN THE MOOD FOR THAT SHIT RIGHT NOW!

RIIIIGHT, I'D SAY YOU'VE HAD ENOUGH OF **THIS!**

I'M NOT DRUNK! I'M **MISERABLE!**



SIGH...

LET'S JUST GO.

I WANT TO FORGET ABOUT THIS DAY AND JUST **SLEEP** THROUGH THE WEEKEND.

MAYBE LOOK THROUGH SOME **JOB APPLICATIONS** ON MONDAY?



SO WHAT ABOUT YOU? HOW DID YOUR THING GO?

HARLEEN, I'M PROPOSING **PHARMACEUTICAL** SOLUTIONS TO TREAT FORMS OF DEPRESSION.

THERE IS MONEY IN THAT!

MY PRESENTATION WENT **FLAWLESSLY.**



WOW... AND THEY USED TO CALL **ME** CYNICAL.

I SEEM TO REMEMBER PEOPLE CALLING YOU **MUCH WORSE** THAN THAT...

LOW BLOW, SHONDRA!

WHATEVER! ALL I'M SAYING IS IF YOU WANT THE RESEARCH CASH, YOU LEARN TO PLAY THE MONEY CROWD.

THE WAY I SEE IT, RICH FOLK HAVE LONG LINES OF ZEROES ON THEIR BANK ACCOUNTS AND SHORT ATTENTION SPANS. SO, THE FIRST THING YOU GOTTA DO IS MAKE THEM SEE HOW YOUR THEORY WILL **MAKE MONEY.**





THEN AGAIN, THAT'S THE THING
WITH ROADBUILDING. YOU GET
A LITTLE TUNNEL-VISIONED.



YOU TEND TO KEEP YOUR EYES
TO THE GROUND SO MUCH THAT BY
THE TIME YOU'RE AT THE GATES OF
HELL, YOU DON'T EVEN REALIZE IT.



NOT EVEN WHEN YOU
CAN FEEL THE FLAMES...



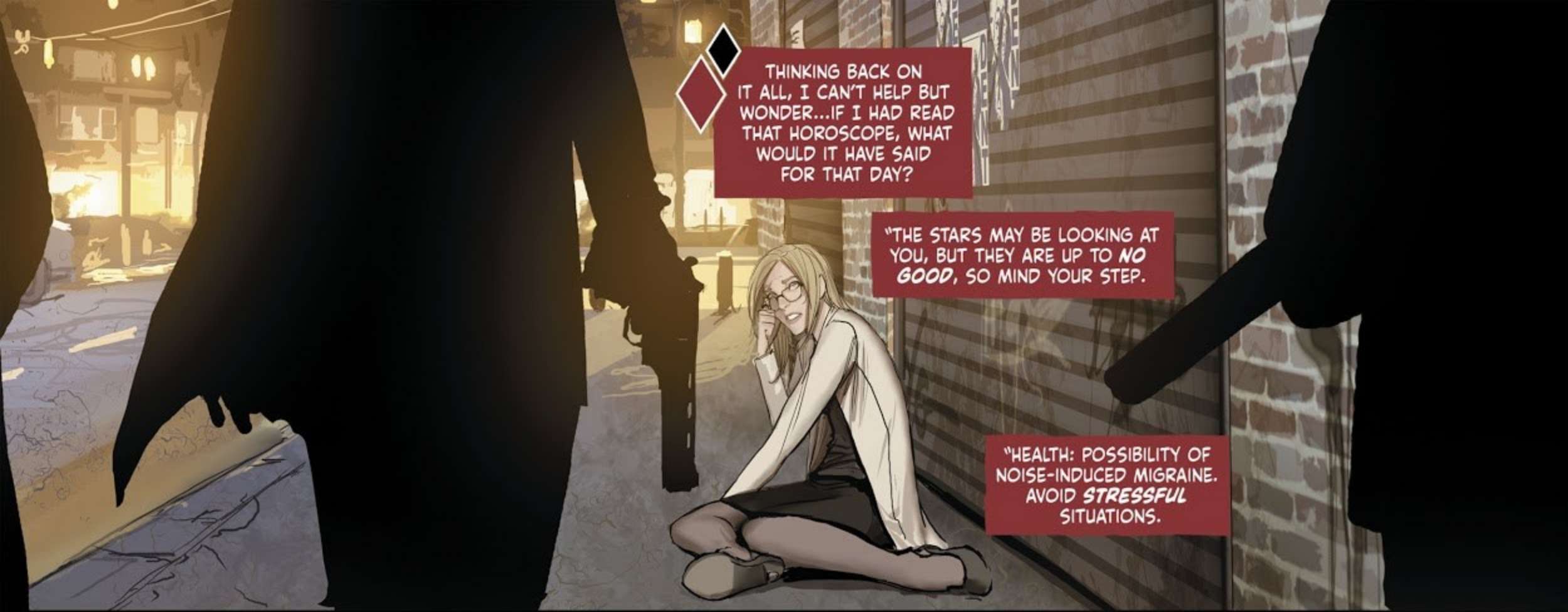
NOT EVEN WHEN YOU CAN
SMELL THE SMOKE...

NOT EVEN WHEN
THE *DEVIL HIMSELF*
COMES TO GREET YOU.

NOW WHAT
DID I TELL YOU, BOYS?
WHEN BUYING WEAPONS,
THERE'S JUST NO BEATING
PERSONAL QUALITY
CONTROL!

WRAP
IT ALL UP
TO GO!

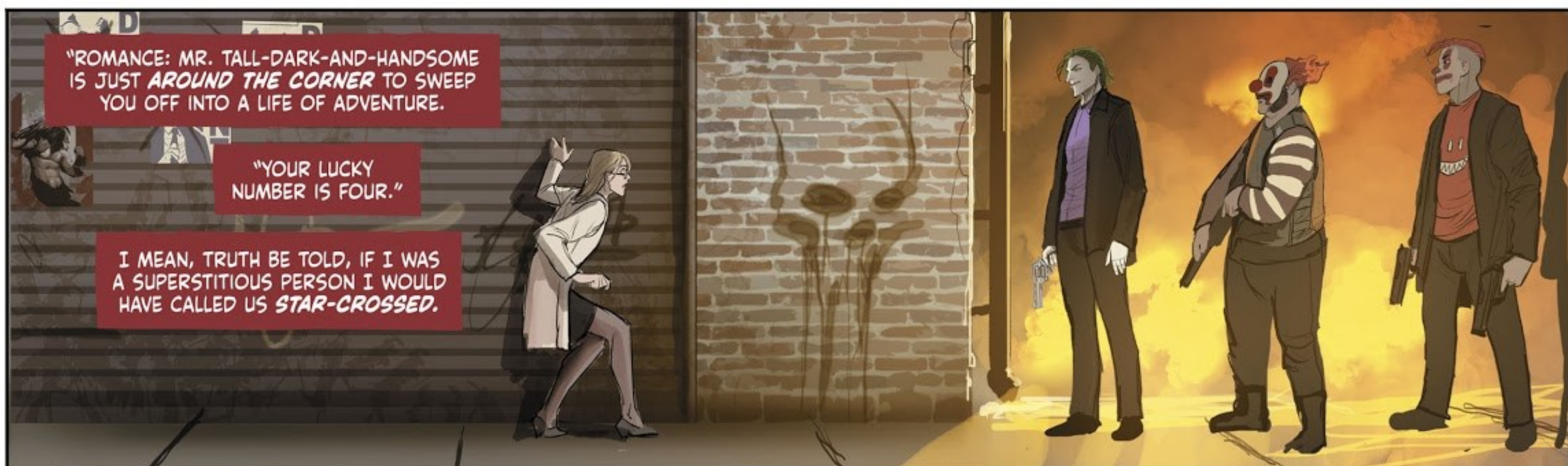




THINKING BACK ON IT ALL, I CAN'T HELP BUT WONDER...IF I HAD READ THAT HOROSCOPE, WHAT WOULD IT HAVE SAID FOR THAT DAY?

"THE STARS MAY BE LOOKING AT YOU, BUT THEY ARE UP TO *NO GOOD*, SO MIND YOUR STEP.

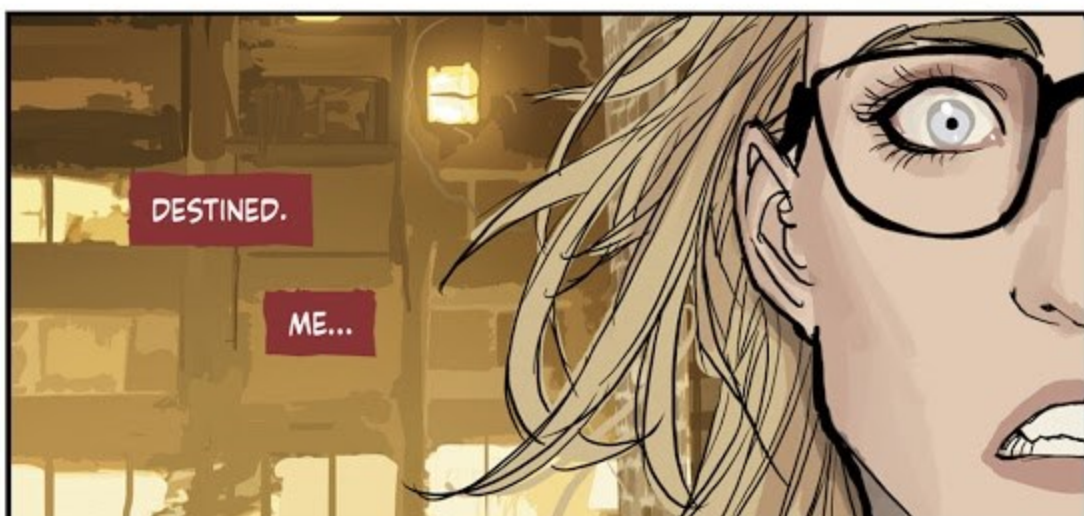
"HEALTH: POSSIBILITY OF NOISE-INDUCED MIGRAINE. AVOID *STRESSFUL* SITUATIONS.



"ROMANCE: MR. TALL-DARK-AND-HANDSOME IS JUST *AROUND THE CORNER* TO SWEEP YOU OFF INTO A LIFE OF ADVENTURE.

"YOUR LUCKY NUMBER IS FOUR."

I MEAN, TRUTH BE TOLD, IF I WAS A SUPERSTITIOUS PERSON I WOULD HAVE CALLED US *STAR-CROSSED*.



DESTINED.

ME...



...AND HIM.

THE MAN I WOULD SOON LOVE.



PICKED A *HELL* OF A NIGHT FOR A WALK!

IT...WASN'T LOVE AT *FIRST SIGHT*, MIND YOU.

IN FACT, LOVE NEVER
EVEN CROSSED MY MIND.

WHAT *DID* CROSS MY MIND,
HOWEVER, WAS A *WHOLE*
LIFETIME OF DECISIONS.



DECISIONS THAT, IN THE END,
NO LONGER MATTERED.

BECAUSE LET'S BE HONEST:
THEN AND THERE, IT WAS
VERY LIKELY THE LAST THING
TO EVER CROSS MY MIND
WOULD BE A *BULLET*.

AAAAHHHA!
LET'S GO,
BOYS!

WE GOT
SOME GIFTS TO
UNWRAP, AND YOU
KNOW HOW I LOVE
THAT *NEW GUN*
SMELL!

YOU BE
CAREFUL OUT THERE,
MA'AM! GOTHAM STREETS
ARE DANGEROUS AT
NIGHT, *DON'T'CHA*
KNOW?!

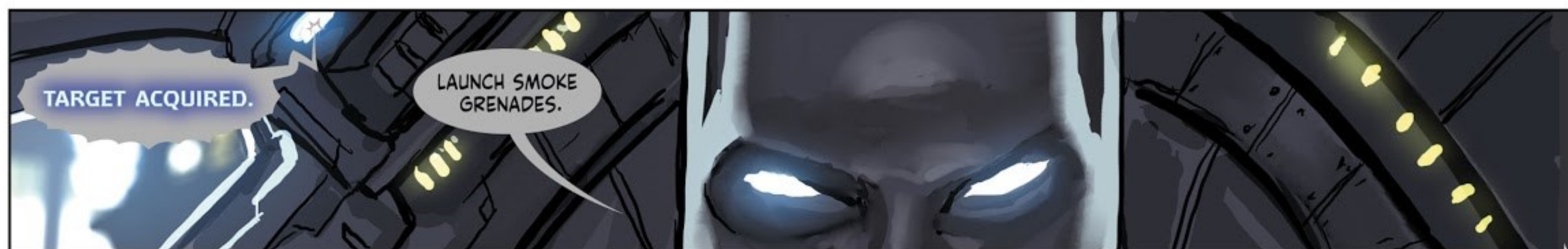
I REMEMBER IT CLEARLY.
MY HEART BEATING ITS
WAY THROUGH MY CHEST,
MY EARS RINGING.

I'M FROZEN IN THE STREET.
DEATH HAS PASSED ME...

IT'S DONE...

IT'S DONE...

THE WORST OF
IT IS DONE!





BOB, YOU'RE MY
NUMBER ONE GUY
NOW!

UH...OKAY,
BOSS!

ANYWAYS, MY
APOLOGIES, BATS! I HAD SOME
COMPANY RESTRUCTURING TO DO,
BUT NOW YOU HAVE MY **FULL
ATTENTION!** HOW MAY I
ASSIST YOU?

**DROP THE
WEAPONS!**

JUST LIKE THAT,
HUH? SERIOUSLY? WHEN
HAS THAT **EVER** WORKED
FOR YOU?

I MEAN,
YOU GOT YOUR MEAN BAT-
PLANE THING...WHAT'S IT GONNA
BE? YOU GONNA OPEN FIRE
ON US? GONNA START
KILLIN'?

POINT I'M MAKING
IS...WE GOT OUR
CARROT, SO WHERE'S
THE STICK?



IT'S MORE
OF A BAT,
REALLY.



HA! AND
THEY SAY YOU DON'T
HAVE A SENSE OF
HUMOR!

I REMEMBER
ONE THOUGHT RUNNING
THROUGH MY DAZED MIND.

I'M TRAPPED...

I'M TRAPPED BETWEEN
SMOKE AND FIRE.



AND I AM
TERRIFIED.

WAH!



WHOA,
LADY! CALM
DOWN!
GOOD
GUYS HERE!

OH THANK
GOD!



CAN
YOU WALK ALL
RIGHT?

Y-YEAH?

GOOD. I'LL
NEED YOU TO KEEP
YOUR HEAD DOWN AND
FOLLOW US! CAN YOU
DO THAT?

FOLLOW
YOU WHERE?

THE
FUCK OUTTA
HERE.

WE'RE
GOING FOR THE
SUBWAY ENTRANCE
AROUND THE
CORNER.

THAT'S...
THAT'S ACROSS
THE ROAD?



OKAY, CHANGE OF PLANS! THIS
WAY! STICK TO THE WALL AND
STAY LOW!

CAN'T YOU
CALL BACKUP OR
SOMETHING?

LADY,
WE WERE THE
BACKUP!

SHIT!

NGH...
THERE'S STILL
MUNITIONS IN THAT
ALLEY...GOD KNOWS
WHAT ELSE CAN
GO OFF.

WE TRY
TO CROSS
NOW, WE MIGHT
GET CAUGHT IN
ANOTHER
BLAST.







I WAS LIKE A *KID* IN A *HORROR STORY* STANDING IN FRONT OF AN ABANDONED RAILWAY TUNNEL. I KNEW *SOMETHING* WAS *LOOKING AT ME* FROM INSIDE OF IT.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
HURRY UP!

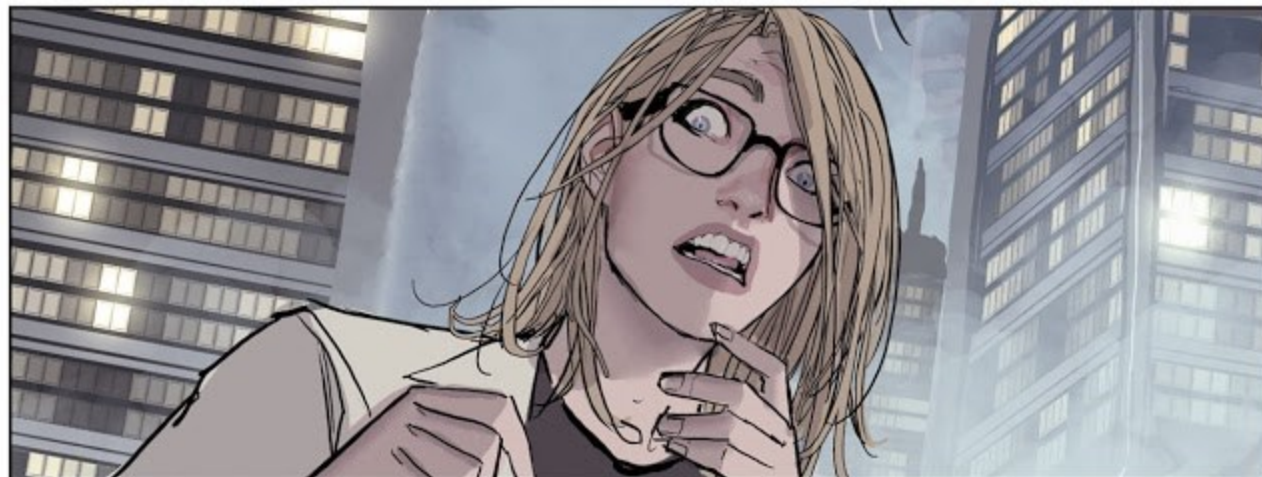
I CAN'T.

THERE WAS A *MALEVOLENCE* IN THE MIST, WATCHING...

AND I JUST KNEW IF I MADE A SINGLE MOVE IT WAS GOING TO...



POUNCE.





THERE ARE NO MORE GUNSHOTS, AND YET
THIS *SILENCE* FEELS EVEN MORE *TERRIFYING*.

IT IS A SILENCE OF
ANTICIPATION...

...LIKE THE MOMENT JUST AFTER A
FLASH OF LIGHTNING IN THE DISTANCE.

AND THEN IT COMES. A *CRACK* IN THE AIR,
A SOUND LIKE A *MASSIVE* FLAG FIGHTING A
GUST OF WIND, AND FOLLOWING IT, A
SINISTER LAUGH...



THEY, HOWEVER, PAY
NO ATTENTION TO ME.



IN FACT, THEIR WORK
WITH ME IS *DONE*.

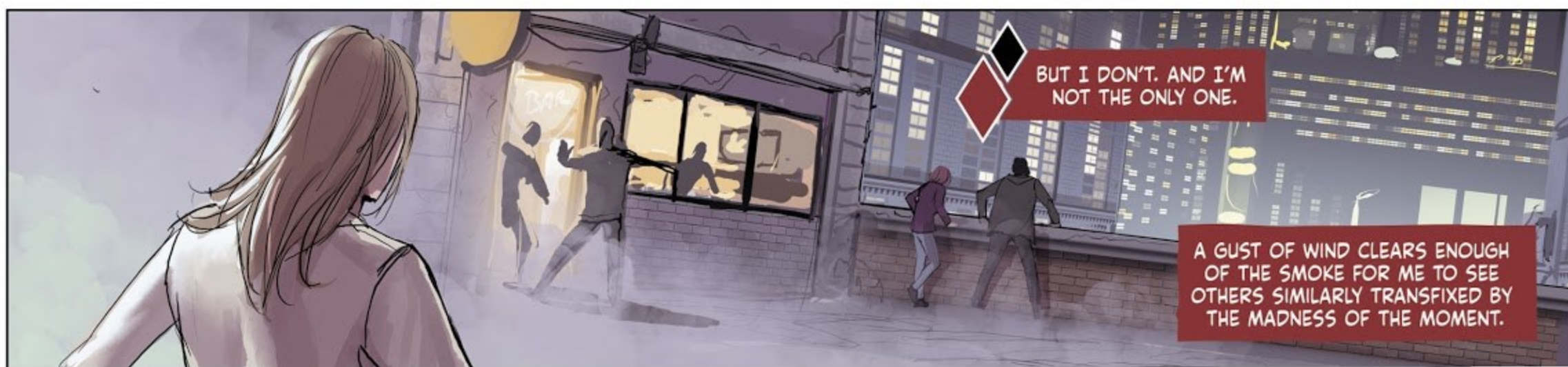


THEY GRANT ME THEIR GIFT OF *FEAR* AND
RESTLESS NIGHTS... AND THEN THEY LEAVE.

AND I THINK, "I SHOULD LEAVE TOO. MY LEGS
ARE MY OWN AGAIN AND I SHOULD JUST..."



"...RUN."



BUT I DON'T. AND I'M
NOT THE ONLY ONE.

A GUST OF WIND CLEARS ENOUGH
OF THE SMOKE FOR ME TO SEE
OTHERS SIMILARLY TRANSFIXED BY
THE MADNESS OF THE MOMENT.



I SHOULD BE
RUNNING AWAY.

WE ALL SHOULD.

INSTEAD, WE RUSH TO THE
RAILING TO SEE THE SPECTACLE,
LIKE A *BLOODTHIRSTY CROWD*
OF ANCIENT ROMANS.



WE COME TO WATCH...



WE COME TO CHEER...



WE COME TO FEAST.



FOR A SECOND...IT COMES OVER ME.
I REMEMBER BEING HELD AT GUNPOINT
AND I TOO FEEL IT. *THE RIGHTEOUS*
INDIGNATION THAT CALLS FOR BLOOD...

FOR A SECOND I WANT
TO *CHEER* AS WELL.

AFTER ALL...HE
IS THE JOKER!

A MURDERER...

BUT I'M SNAPPED
OUT OF IT BY A
STRANGE THOUGHT...

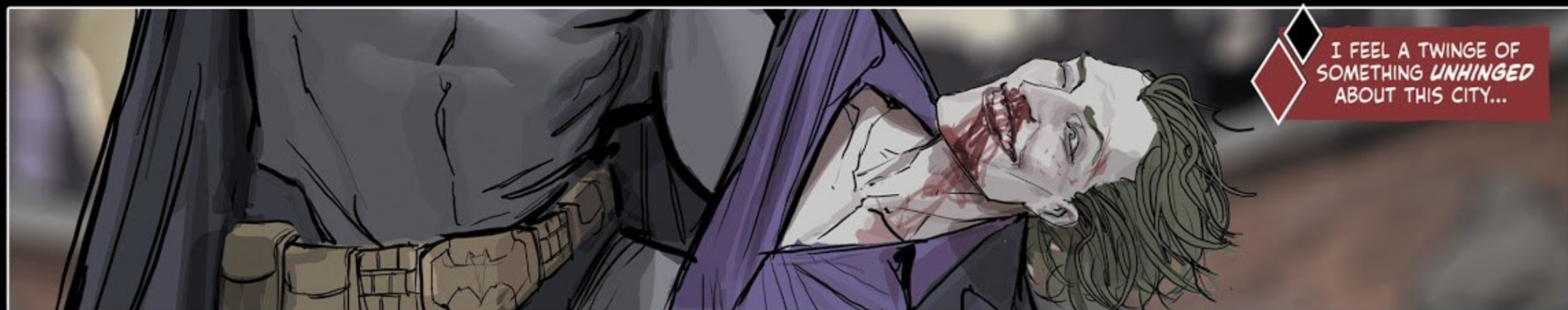
IT DROWNED OUT
THE SOUND...

THE *CHEERING*
DROWNED OUT THE
SOUND OF THE *FIST*
CONNECTING.

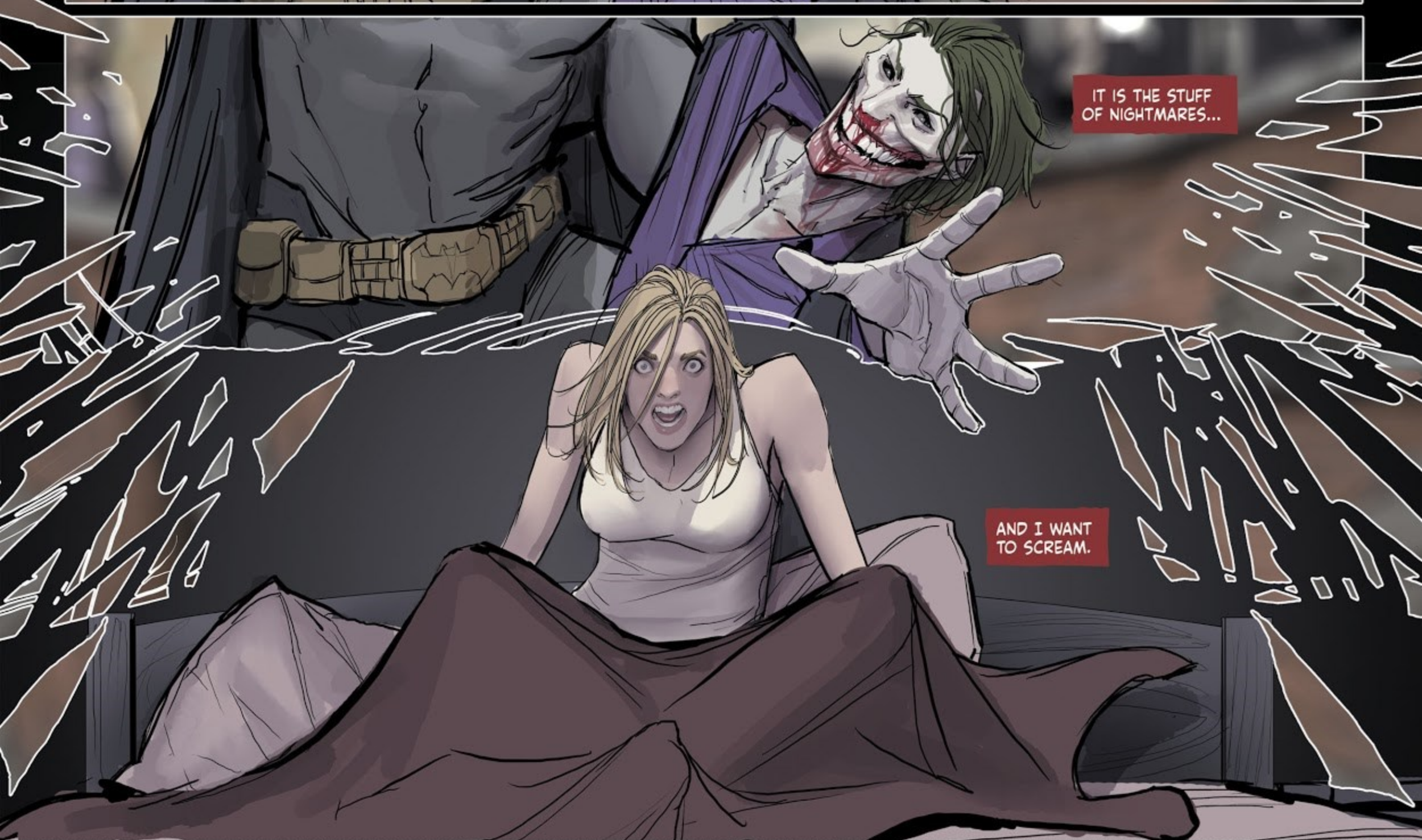
INSTEAD OF SICKENING
CRUNCHES, THE SOUNDS
HIS PUNCHES MADE
WERE...

FOR THE FIRST TIME
EVER, I TRULY *FEEL* IT.





I FEEL A TWINGE OF
SOMETHING *UNHINGED*
ABOUT THIS CITY...



IT IS THE STUFF
OF NIGHTMARES...

AND I WANT
TO SCREAM.



THREE DAYS PASSED AND I
AM LEFT WITH *MEMORIES*
AND DREAMS.



TERRIBLE DREAMS...



STRESSFUL
DREAMS...



DREAMS THAT
LINGER.

AHA
HAHAH
HA...

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF CRIMINAL PSYCHOLOGY.

Gotham City.

I DECIDED TO KEEP THE
EVENTS OF THAT FATEFUL
NIGHT TO MYSELF.

WHO KNOWS, MAYBE IF I HAD **TOLD**
SOMEONE ABOUT THAT NIGHT, THINGS
WOULD HAVE **GONE DIFFERENTLY**.

MY **LIFE** WOULD HAVE
BEEN...DIFFERENT.

BUT I KEPT QUIET. THE LAST FOUR
YEARS WORKING AT THE CENTER
TAUGHT ME TO KEEP MY HEAD DOWN.

TO NOT ATTRACT ATTENTION.

SEE...I HAD THIS **FLING** WITH A
PROFESSOR BACK IN MY COLLEGE
DAYS AND PEOPLE FOUND OUT ABOUT IT.

IT WAS ONE OF THOSE THINGS
THAT TEND TO STICK TO YOU.

TEND TO...DEFINE YOU
IN THE EYES OF SOME.

DIDN'T HELP THAT TWO OF THE
PEOPLE WORKING AT THE CENTER
HAD GONE TO SCHOOL WITH ME...

SUFFICE IT TO SAY, WORD GOT
AROUND. AND I GAINED A...LET'S
CALL IT A REPUTATION.

OKAY,
WHO DID YOU
\$#%\$ TO
GET IT?

HEY!

YOU KNOW WHAT? AFTER MY
WEEKEND I'VE GOT **ZERO**
PATIENCE FOR YOUR
BULLSHIT, PAULINE!

OH, DON'T YOU
GIVE ME THAT **CRAP!** HOW
DID YOU **DO IT?** DID YOU **\$#5\$**
SOMEONE FROM THE FINANCE BOARD?

QUINZEL, DR.
MATHEWS'S OFFICE,
NOW!

UH, DR. MATHEWS?



OH, I'M SORRY, I DIDN'T KNOW THERE WAS SOMEONE ELSE IN HERE. I'LL WAIT OUTSIDE.

NO, NO, QUINZEL! COME IN. WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU!



DR. QUINZEL?



HARLEEN, PLEASE! HEY, I **REMEMBER** YOU. YOU WERE AT MY PRESENTATION...AND THEN YOU **LEFT**.



GOOD MEMORY.



I'M GOOD WITH FACES. PLUS I TEND TO REMEMBER PEOPLE LEAVING MY PANEL WHEN I'M TRYING TO PRESENT MY LIFE'S WORK. ALL 28 OF THEM...



UH...SORRY I'M RAMBLING. I TEND TO DO THAT WHEN I'M NERVOUS.



AM I FIRED?

WHAT?



WELL, I ASSUME HE'S HERE TO **COMPLAIN ABOUT ME** BORING HIM OR SOMETHING!

AND I NEVER REALLY HAD A VERY STRONG FOOT TO STAND ON IN THE INSTITUTE, SO...

OH MY GOD...MR. FOX, PLEASE!



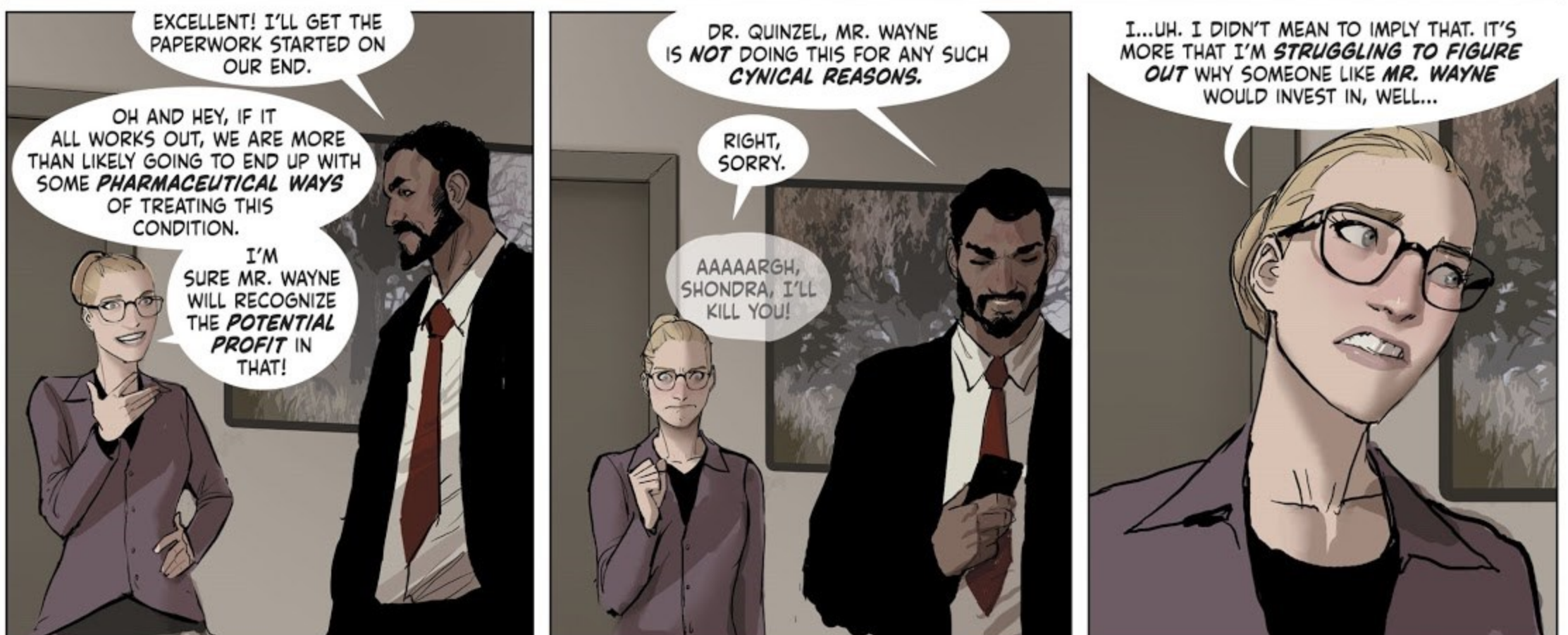
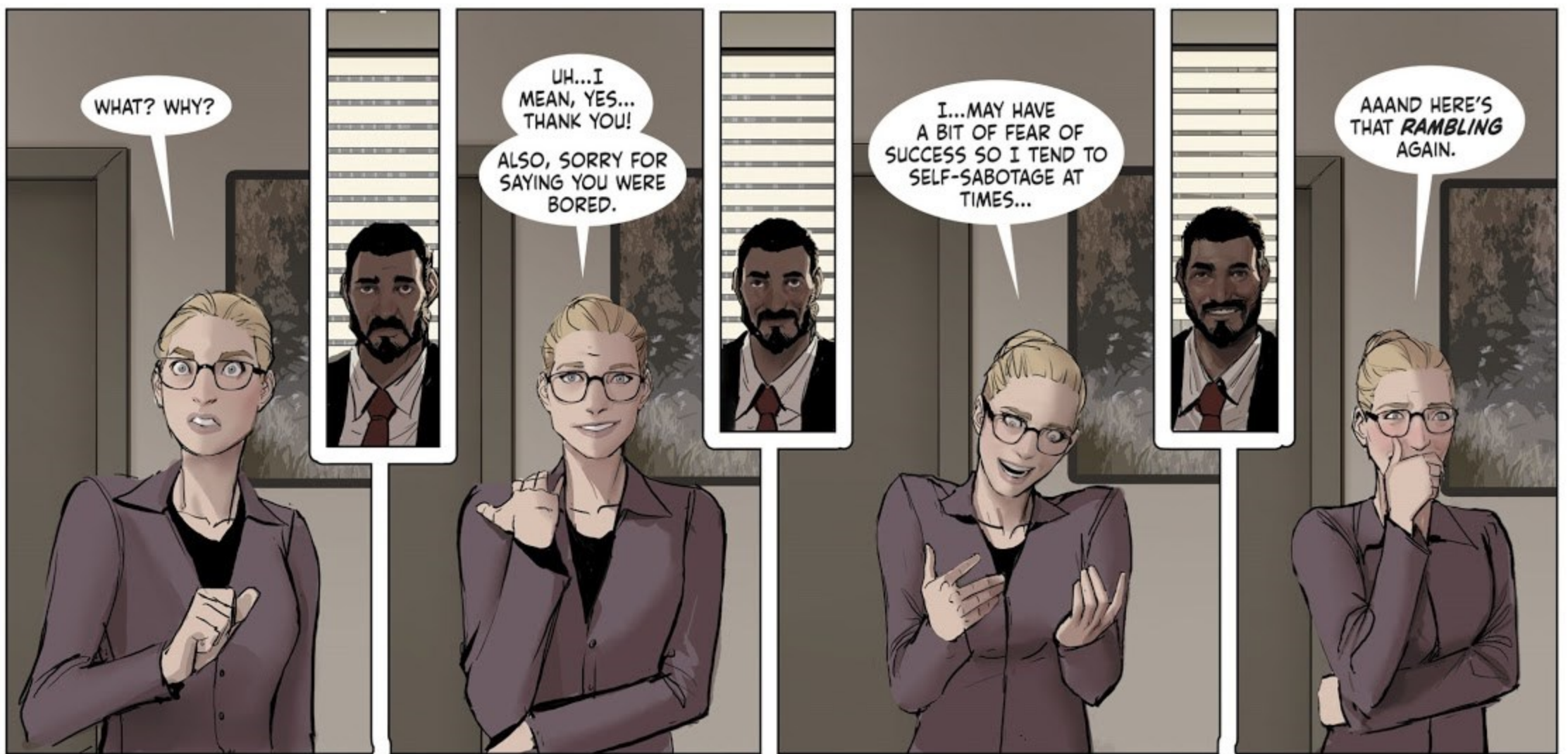
FIRST OF ALL, I WASN'T **BORED** BY YOUR PITCH.

I'D SIMPLY HEARD ENOUGH OF IT TO UNDERSTAND ITS **POTENTIAL**.

THAT BEING SAID, ALLOW ME TO ACTUALLY INTRODUCE MYSELF.

MY NAME IS **LUCIUS FOX**.

AMONG OTHER THINGS, I AM THE CHIEF SCIENTIFIC ADVISOR TO THE WAYNE FOUNDATION, AND I'M HERE TO TELL YOU WE ARE INTERESTED IN **FUNDING YOUR RESEARCH**.





MR. WAYNE
HAS A **PERSONAL**
HISTORY WITH CRIME
IN THIS CITY.

HE WOULD
LOOK FOR **ANY**
PLAUSIBLE WAY TO
HELP **REDUCE** IT.

I, FOR ONE,
CONSIDER YOUR THEORY
PLAUSIBLE ENOUGH TO
MERIT THE REQUESTED
FUNDS.

IT HELPS THAT
YOUR PROPOSED
RESEARCH BUDGET
IS EXCEEDINGLY
MODEST.



I MEAN...YEAH. THE ONLY
REAL **COST** WILL BE THE
SECOND PHASE WITH THE
BRAIN ACTIVITY
NEUROIMAGING.

EVERYTHING
BEFORE THAT
IS INTERVIEW
WORK.



WHICH MEANS...OH GOD, NOW I GOTTA FIND
OUT HOW TO ACTUALLY **GET ACCESS**
TO ARKHAM, BLACKGATE, AND
THE GOTHAM POLICE...



RELAX,
DOCTOR.

ARKHAM SHOULDN'T
BE A **PROBLEM**. MR. WAYNE
HAS **FUNDED** ITS REPAIRS
AND SECURITY, SO THEY
OWE US.

SAME GOES
FOR THE GOTHAM P.D.
WE CAN MAKE SOME
CALLS.



MEANWHILE
I'LL ASK FOR PERMITS
FOR ACCESSING
BLACKGATE.

PREFERABLY
WITHOUT THE
D.A.'S OFFICE HEARING
ABOUT IT.

EVER SINCE
MY EXPERT WITNESS
TESTIMONY ON THE **NYGMA**
CASE, DENT HAS BEEN ON A
WARPATH AGAINST THE
CENTER.



WELL, I SUPPOSE THAT'S
SETTLED THEN. GOOD LUCK,
DOCTOR. PLEASURE
MEETING YOU!

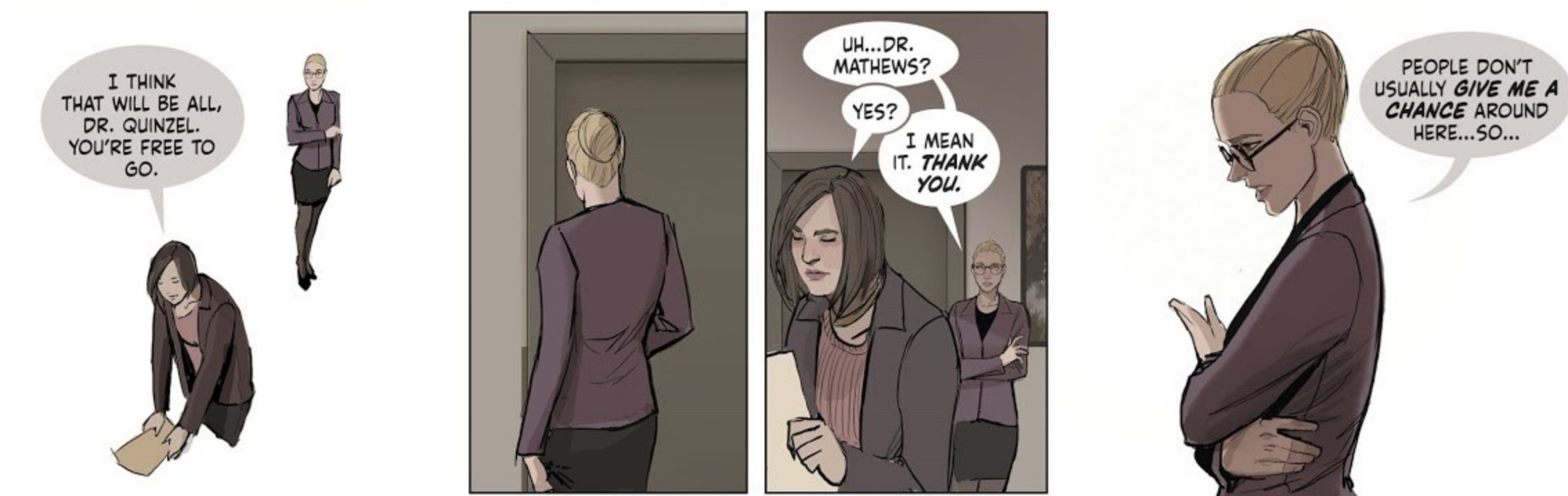


Y-YEAH...
UH...LIKEWISE!



WELL, I'LL GET IN CONTACT WITH **HUGO**
STRANGE AT ARKHAM AND MAKE
SURE HE'S UP TO DATE
WITH ALL OF THIS.

I DON'T THINK
STRANGE WILL BE **OVERLY**
ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT WAYNE
PUSHING A STAFF MEMBER ON HIM.
THE LEAST I CAN DO IS GREASE
THE WHEELS BY **VOUCHING**
FOR YOU.



AND THERE IT WAS. ONE THING WENT RIGHT FOR ME, AND ONE PERSON HAD MY BACK, AND I FELT LIKE A MILLION BUCKS.



IT TOOK TWO WEEKS
FOR MY TRANSFER
TO BE CLEARED, AND
YOU KNOW WHAT?

I HAD **NO
PROBLEM**
WITH THAT.

AFTER ALL, I HAD
EARNED MY MOMENT
OF GLOATING, AND YOU
BETTER BELIEVE I WAS
GOING TO **ENJOY IT!**

AND THAT WASN'T THE ONLY
IMPROVEMENT. MY PREVIOUSLY
SHIT-YOUR-PANTS-TERRIFYING
NIGHTMARES SUBSIDED.



BY WEEK TWO, THEY
WERE REPLACED BY BRIEF,
UNSETTLING DREAMS.

IN THEM, THE MIST WAS STILL
THERE. BUT THE **MONSTERS**
SEEMED **ABSENT**.



AND I WAS VERY MUCH
OKAY WITH **THAT**, TOO.



THE DAY I LEFT
THE INSTITUTE WAS
A HAPPY DAY.

I FELT LIKE I WAS LEAVING
ALL THE BULLSHIT BEHIND
ME AND I WAS WALKING TO
A BRIGHT FUTURE.

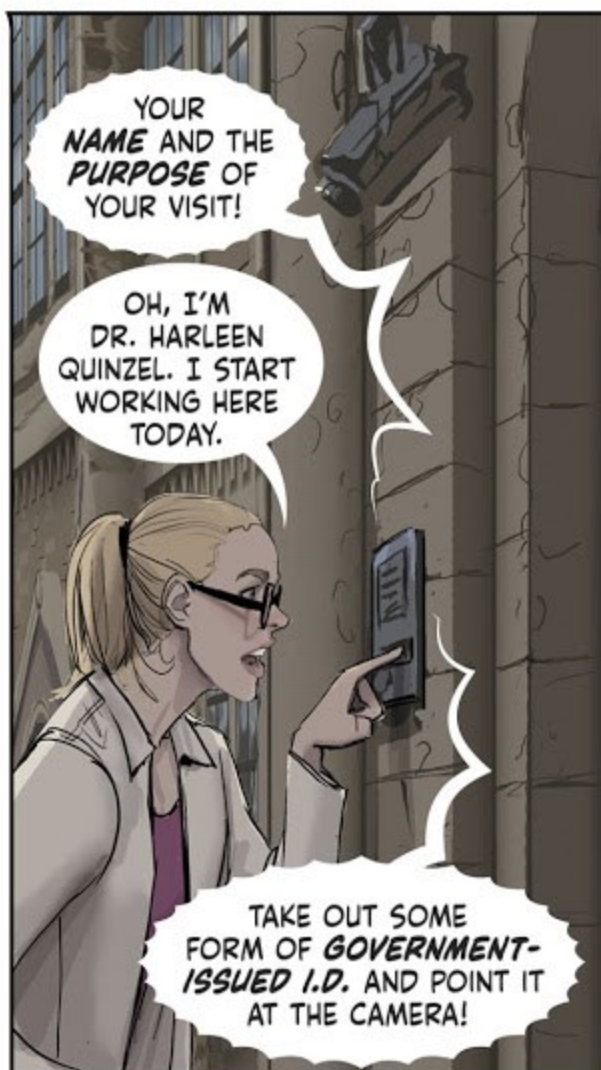
I GUESS THERE IS SOMETHING
TO BE SAID ABOUT WALKING
TOWARD THE LIGHT.

YOU TEND NOT TO **NOTICE** THE
SHAPE OF **YOUR OWN SHADOW**.

I KNEW NOTHING OF MY FUTURE.
STARING AT THE LIGHT, I CARED
LITTLE ABOUT THE SHADOWS.
ALL I KNEW...



...WAS THAT I FINALLY *MADE IT*.





HEY, DR.
UH...QUINTZLE? IS
THAT RIGHT?

IT'S *QUINZEL*.
HARLEEN QUINZEL.



ODD NAME.

MIDDLE NAME
FRANCES.

HM...

THAT'S
A MOUTHFUL.

ANYHOW,
I'M TIM. TIM
BRONSON.



I'M THE CHIEF OF
SECURITY HERE.

COME ON,
LET'S GET YOU
INTO OUR
SYSTEM.

RIGHT...



UH, SPEAKING OF *SECURITY*... I WAS
A HALF STEP AWAY FROM A FULL
PELVIC EXAM THERE.

IS THAT THE *STANDARD
OPERATING PROCEDURE*,
OR...?

OH, THAT...
WE'RE ON *HIGH ALERT* AT
LEAST UNTIL HIS *TRANSFER*
IS COMPLETED.

HIS...



HONEEEY, I'M

HOME!



LOOK AT
ALL THESE *GLUM*
FACES!

YOU *SEEM*
TROUBLED! HAVE YOU
CONSIDERED THERAPY?
IT'S DONE *WONDERS*
FOR ME!



NOTHING?
OKAY, HOW 'BOUT THIS:
THEY SAY THAT THE DEFINITION
OF MADNESS IS DOING THE **SAME**
THING OVER AND OVER AGAIN
AND **EXPECTING DIFFERENT**
RESULTS.

SAY...

COME TO THINK
OF IT, YOU SURE DO
KEEP BRINGING ME **BACK**
HERE OVER AND
OVER AGAIN!

STILL
NOTHING,
HUH?



I PREFERRED THE **OLD**
SECURITY STAFF...THEY HAD
A SENSE OF HUMOR.

WHAT
HAPPENED TO
THEM?

YOUR ESCAPE
HAPPENED.



AAAAH...
SO THIS ONE
IS **ON ME**, THEN...WELL
NOW I JUST FEEL LIKE A
COMPLETE JACKASS.

TAKE HIM
AWAY!

WOULD
IT HELP IF
I SAID I WAS...



SORRY?



SORRY 'BOUT
THAT, DOC.

NO, NO,
IT'S FINE.

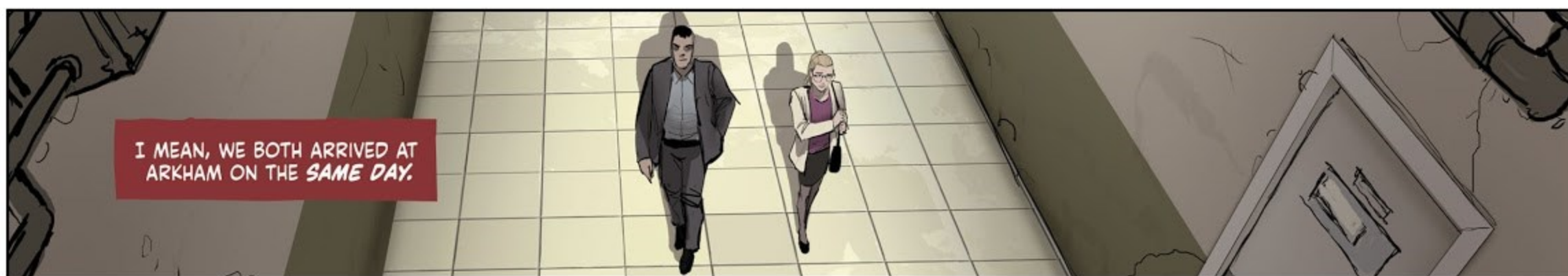
HE'S A BIT
INTENSE THE FIRST
TIME YOU MEET HIM,
BUT YOU'LL SHAKE IT
OFF FAST.

Y-YEAH...



BACK THEN IT ALL FELT LIKE NOTHING MORE THAN A **TERRIFYING COINCIDENCE**.

BUT KNOWING NOW WHAT I NEVER KNEW THEN...I CAN'T HELP BUT ONCE AGAIN THINK OF SHONDRA'S STARS.



I MEAN, WE BOTH ARRIVED AT ARKHAM ON THE **SAME DAY**.



WE WENT THROUGH THE **SAME THINGS** FOR DIFFERENT REASONS...

OKAY NOW...LOOK THIS WAY.



I KNEW NONE OF THAT BACK THEN. FOR ME, IT WAS SIMPLY A **FRESH START**.

I REMEMBER THINKING, **IT'S A NEW PLACE. NO OLD BAGGAGE. I'LL DO MY RESEARCH, AND I'LL FINALLY SMILE AND MAKE SOME FRIENDS.**

OKAY, STAND STILL...

OH, YOU PROBABLY SHOULDN'T SMILE.

TURNING OUT, ARKHAM
WAS NO PLACE FOR SMILES.

HERE YOU
GO, DOCTOR
UH...DOC!

HARLEY WILL DO.

OR FRIENDSHIPS...

DOC HARLEY...OKAY.
BY THE
WAY, YOU'LL WANT
TO CHECK IN WITH
DR. STRANGE.

HUGO STRANGE M.D.

NOW
THEN, DR.
QUINZOLLE...

OH
FOR CRYING
OUT LOUD...

ARKHAM
IS A PLACE OF
HEALING.

AND
I VERY MUCH
INTEND TO **KEEP**
IT SO.



HE SAID WELCOME,
BUT LET'S BE HONEST,
THIS WAS ARKHAM.



A SMALL, WINDOWLESS OFFICE
WITH A MISPELLED NAME WAS
AS GOOD AS IT GOT.

Dr. Quinzoll

AND I WAS OKAY WITH THAT. BEATS
A CUBICLE, AND ANYWAY, I HADN'T
GONE THERE FOR COMFORT. I HAD
A *JOB* TO DO.



I CAME TO ARKHAM WITH
A LIST IN HAND. A VERY
SPECIFIC LIST.



IT COMPRISED PEOPLE WHO
WOULD BE MY PERFECT
EXAMPLES OF THE *ABSOLUTE*
DETERIORATION OF EMPATHY.

I HAD A SIMILAR LIST FOR BLACKGATE
PRISON, BUT AS I WASN'T ALLOWED
THERE AT THE MOMENT...WELL, YOU
KNOW HOW IT GOES. YOU PLAY THE
CARDS YOU HAVE, NOT THE CARDS
YOU WANT.

AND MY, WHAT A DECK IT WAS. EVERY
PSYCHOLOGIST'S *DREAM*. THE STUFF
THAT CAREERS ARE BUILT ON.



THE KINGS,
QUEENS, JACKS,
AND ACES OF
THE *CRIMINALLY*
INSANE.

AND YES...
A JOKER
AS WELL...



BACK OF THE LINE
FOR YOU.



I WASN'T NEARLY
READY TO DEAL
WITH *HIM*... BUT
THAT WAS FINE.



I HAD MORE THAN ENOUGH
ANTISOCIAL PERSONALITY
DISORDERS TO GO THROUGH.

THE WAY I SAW IT, BY THE TIME
I WAS DONE WITH THEM, MY
NIGHTMARES WOULD HAVE GONE
AWAY, AND HE WOULD SHRINK
IN THE EYES OF THIS...WELL...
YOU GET IT.



AND YOU KNOW WHAT? AT FIRST, IT SEEMED THIS MIGHT BE THE CASE.

I MEAN, HE WAS AN INTENSE PERSONALITY BUT LET'S BE HONEST, THEY ALL WERE.

OH EVERY SCAR IS A STORY...

A LOT OF STORIES, A LOT OF REAL HAPPY ENDINGS.

YES, I'M AWARE OF THEIR...STORIES MR. ZSASZ.

I'M CURRENTLY INTERESTED IN YOUR STORY.

BUT THEY ARE ALL MY STORY!

RIGHT...

EMPATHY?!

YOU WANT TO ASK ME ABOUT MY EMPATHY?!

I CAN LITERALLY FEEL THE DYING OF NATURE IN MY VERY FLESH.

I CAN HEAR THE SCREAMS OF THE GREEN AND THE TRIUMPHANT HOWLS OF THE FESTERING DECAY.

AND YOU HAVE THE NERVE TO ASK ME ABOUT EMPATHY, AS YOU SCRIBBLE NOTES ON THE DESECRATED CORPSES OF FELLED TREES!?

THE ONLY REASON I AM EVEN HERE IS BECAUSE I LET THEM CATCH ME!

MY RIDDLES ARE THEIR FIGHTING CHANCE.

BUT DON'T WORRY, DOCTOR, I'M HERE TEMPORARILY...

IN FACT, I'LL GIVE YOU A CLUE OF WHAT I'LL DO!

THERE'S A THING ON SUPERMAN'S BACK, A WONDERFUL THING, WITH A LETTER ON TOP.

NAME ME THAT LETTER AND NAME ME THAT THING...

S...CAPE?

NO ROOM FOR EMPATHY.

MAN-EAT-MAN WORLD.

ME...TOP OF THE FOOD CHAIN.

AND SEE ME GO FREE WITH NO CHAIN, CUFF, OR STRING!

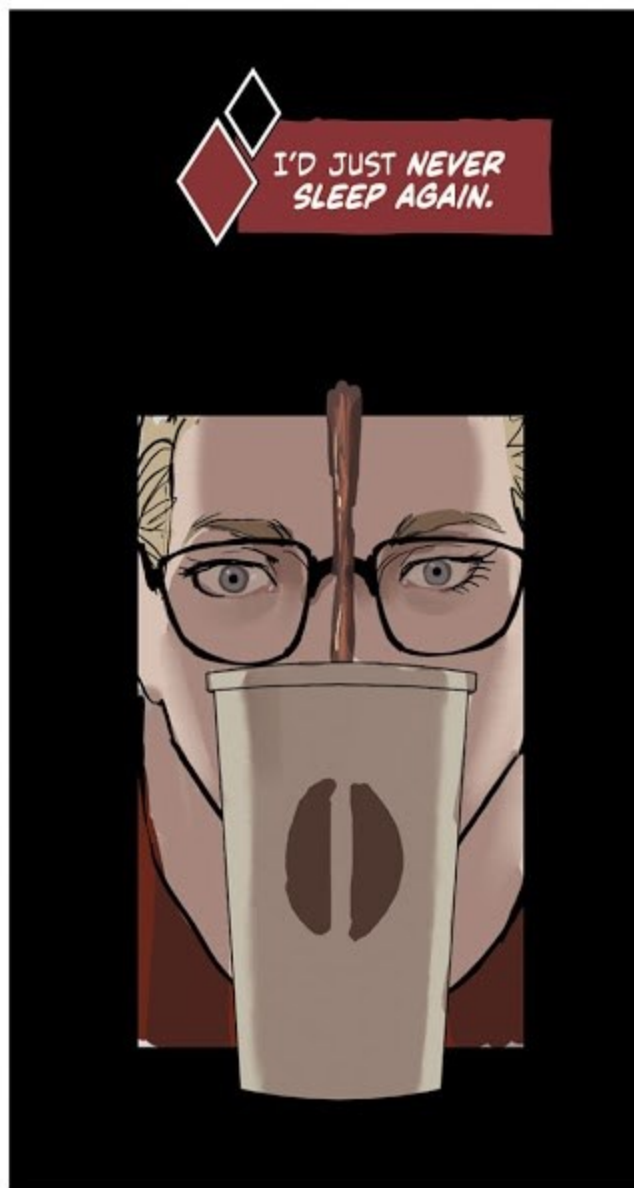
WELL, DOCTOR? WHAT WILL I DO?

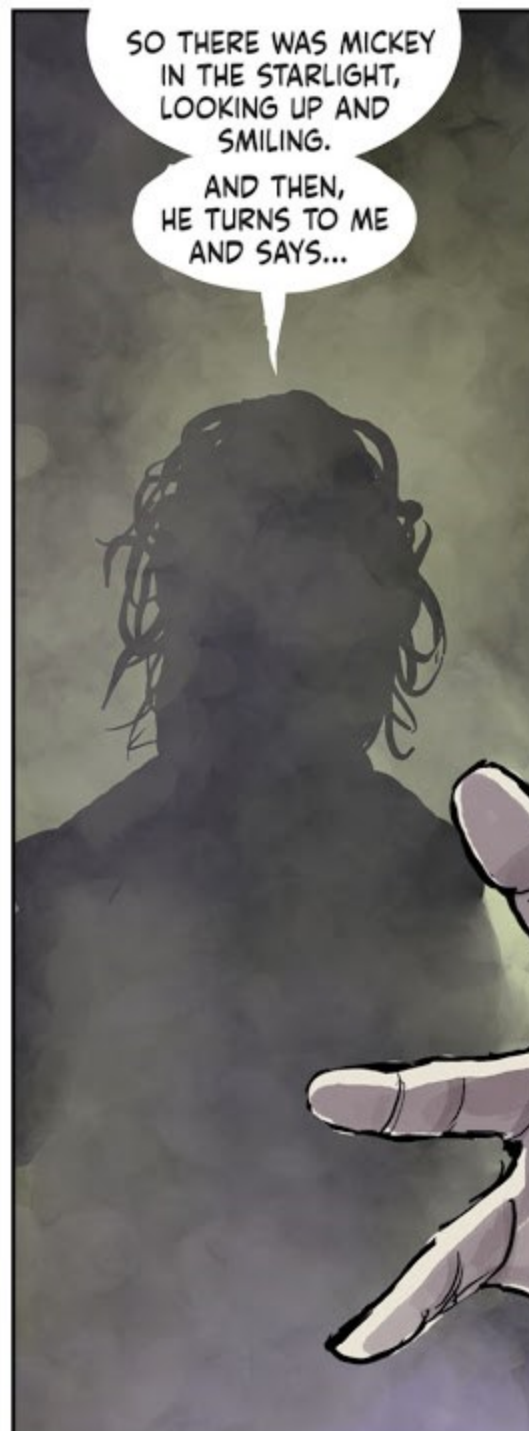
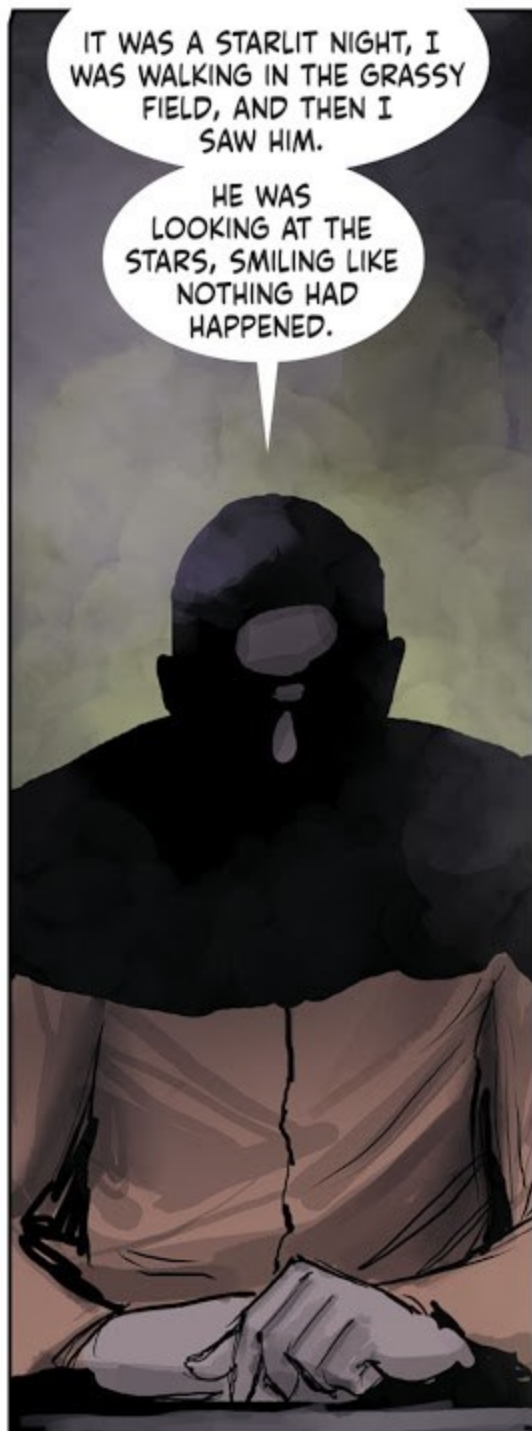
FOR A WHILE MY SLEEP IMPROVED, BUT AS MY INTERVIEW LIST GREW SHORTER, MY THOUGHTS TURNED TO THE FILE IN MY DRAWER. TO HIM.

HE STARTED WEIGHING HEAVY ON MY MIND, AND WITH THAT, THE MISTS FOUND THEIR WAY BACK INTO MY DREAMS, NOW MORE TERRIFYING THAN EVER.

THERE WAS ONLY ONE THING I COULD DO ABOUT IT.

HotComic.net





BLAAH!

FOR MORE THAN
THREE WEEKS I'D BEEN
AVOIDING HIM.

FOR ALMOST A MONTH
HE HAD *INVAD*ED MY
DREAMS.

AND THAT DAY I KNEW THERE
WAS NO ESCAPE FROM IT.

FUCK!

FINE,
DAMN IT!

OKAY, HARLEY! YOU'RE A GROWN
WOMAN WHO SAT FACE TO FACE
WITH *KILLER CROC*.

THIS
CLOWN IS
NOTHING!

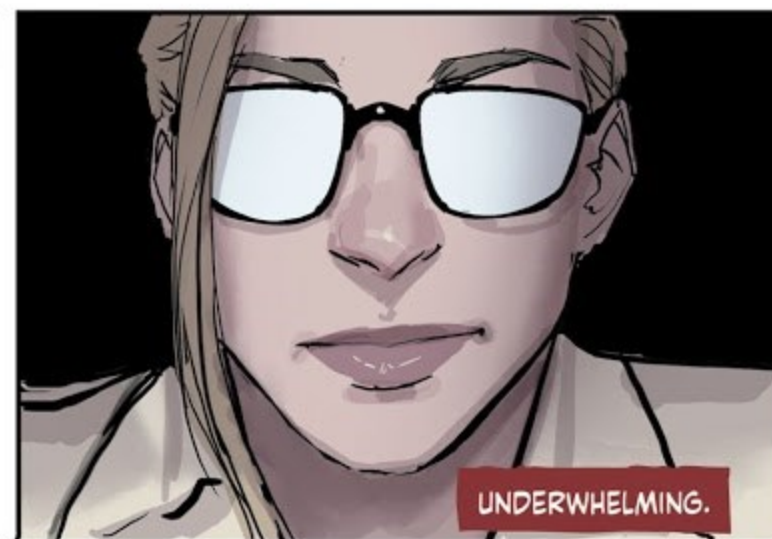
I SAID THAT, BUT I
REMEMBER MY HANDS
SHAKING AS I CARRIED
BOXES WITH TAPES OF
HIS INTERVIEWS.



PUTTING THE FIRST TAPE IN WAS ITS OWN SPECIAL KIND OF NIGHTMARE.



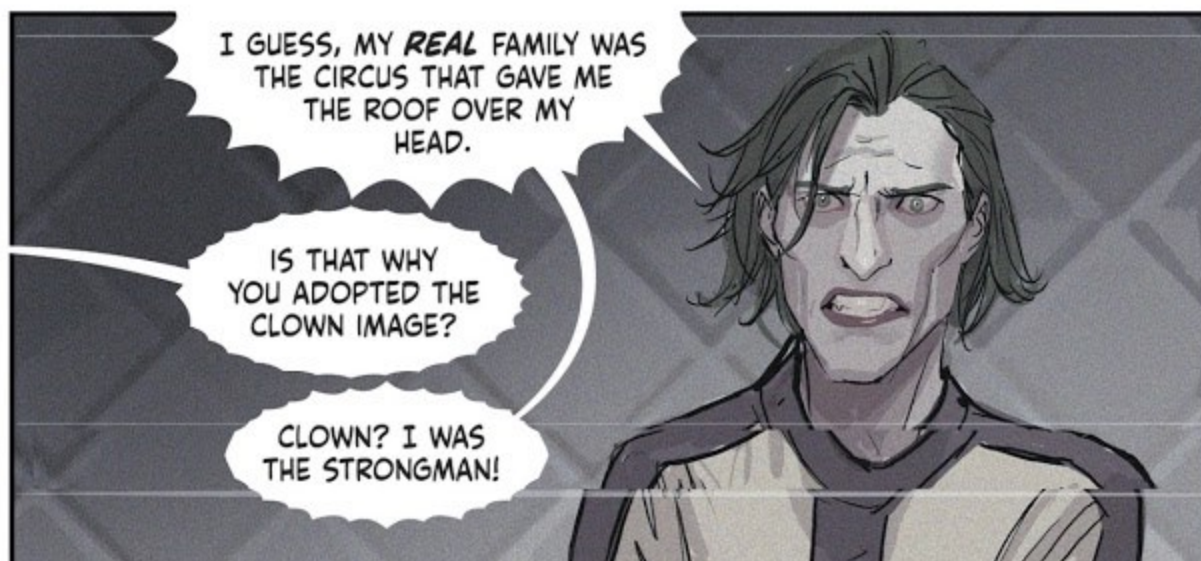
BUT THEN, THE TAPE STARTED ROLLING AND IT ALL JUST FELT...



UNDERWHELMING.



MY *FAMILY*? IT'S A SAD STORY, REALLY. VICTIMS IN A *FIRE* DOWN AT THE DOCKS.



I GUESS, MY *REAL* FAMILY WAS THE CIRCUS THAT GAVE ME THE ROOF OVER MY HEAD.

IS THAT WHY YOU ADOPTED THE CLOWN IMAGE?

CLOWN? I WAS THE STRONGMAN!



THIS WAS WRONG. WHATEVER I SAW THAT NIGHT IN THE STREET, IT *WASN'T* THERE IN THOSE TAPES.

THIS WASN'T THE GRINNING MAN WITH THE COLD VOICE WHO HELD ME AT *GUNPOINT*. FOR A MOMENT I FOUND MYSELF QUESTIONING MY OWN MEMORIES: MAYBE I JUST SAW HIM IN A MORE TERRIFYING LIGHT? AFTER ALL, HE NEVER REALLY PULLED THAT TRIGGER.

BUT THEN, AS I KEPT WATCHING, I STARTED NOTICING IT.

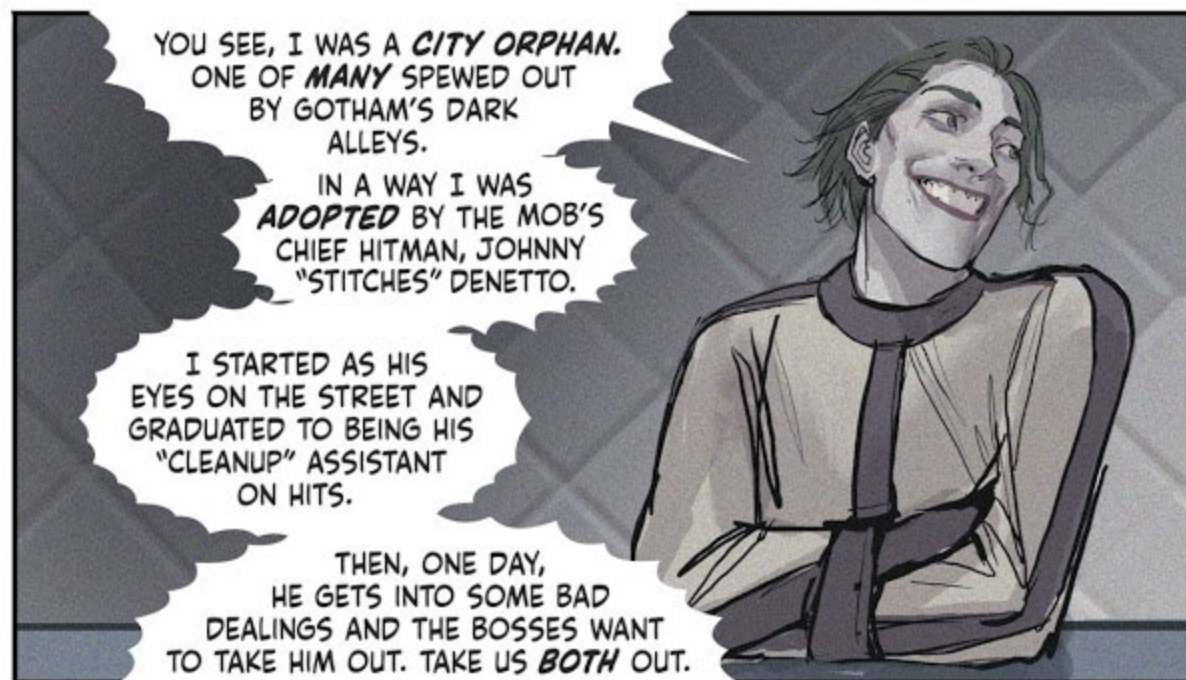


SO, "*JOE*," HOW DID YOU COME TO CRAFT THIS PERSONA OF THE JOKER?

JUST GONNA JUMP *RIGHT INTO* THAT ONE?

MY PREVIOUS SHRINKS WOULD USUALLY *BUTTER ME UP* BEFORE GOING THERE, BUT YOU...

YOU'RE A GO-GETTER, I *LIKE* THAT!

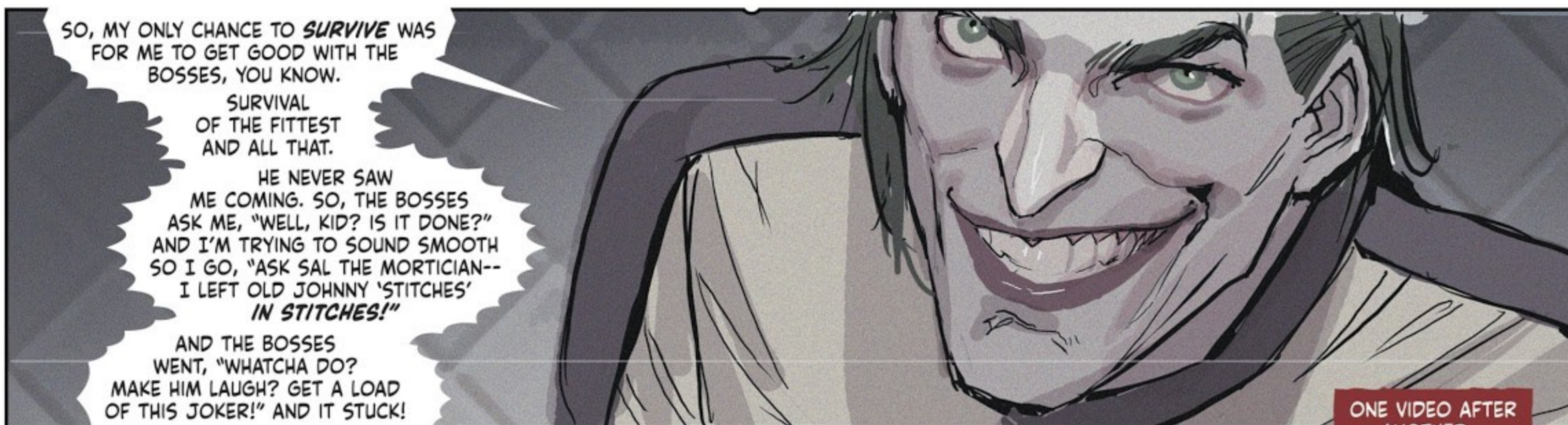


YOU SEE, I WAS A *CITY ORPHAN*. ONE OF *MANY* SPEWED OUT BY GOTHAM'S DARK ALLEYS.

IN A WAY I WAS *ADOPTED* BY THE MOB'S CHIEF HITMAN, JOHNNY "STITCHES" DENETTO.

I STARTED AS HIS EYES ON THE STREET AND GRADUATED TO BEING HIS "CLEANUP" ASSISTANT ON HITS.

THEN, ONE DAY, HE GETS INTO SOME BAD DEALINGS AND THE BOSSES WANT TO TAKE HIM OUT. TAKE US *BOTH* OUT.



SO, MY ONLY CHANCE TO *SURVIVE* WAS FOR ME TO GET GOOD WITH THE BOSSES, YOU KNOW.

SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST AND ALL THAT.

HE NEVER SAW ME COMING. SO, THE BOSSES ASK ME, "WELL, KID? IS IT DONE?" AND I'M TRYING TO SOUND SMOOTH SO I GO, "ASK SAL THE MORTICIAN-- I LEFT OLD JOHNNY 'STITCHES' *IN STITCHES!*"

AND THE BOSSES WENT, "WHATCHA DO? MAKE HIM LAUGH? GET A LOAD OF THIS JOKER!" AND IT STUCK!

ONE VIDEO AFTER ANOTHER...



LIE AFTER LIE
AFTER LIE.

MY REAL
NAME IS **WILLIAM
JOHNSON**.
BILLY JAY TO
FRIENDS.



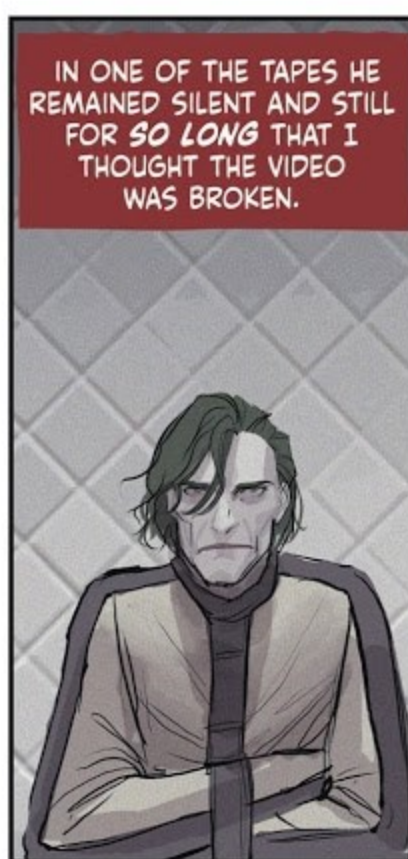
ALL SPOKEN IN THIS
CALM, ALMOST WARM
TONE OF VOICE.

AND THEN THEY POURED
ALL THIS **PAINT** OVER ME,
AND I KNOW IT'S JUST A
PRANK BUT TURNS OUT
I'M **SEVERELY
ALLERGIC**
TO...



AND MY SON'S LAST
WORDS WERE, "**SMILE,**
DAD...FOR ME..."

AND I
DID. I KEPT
SMILING.



IN ONE OF THE TAPES HE
REMAINED SILENT AND STILL
FOR **SO LONG** THAT I
THOUGHT THE VIDEO
WAS BROKEN.



AND THEN THERE WAS
ONE WHERE HE SPENT
A SESSION JUST
NAPPING.

UM...JOKER?

SNORE



IT WAS **ALL** AN ACT.

A COMEDY ROUTINE
FOR **HIS OWN** AMUSEMENT.

A GAME HE PLAYED WITH EACH AND
EVERY PSYCHIATRIST ASSIGNED TO
HIS CASE.

I FOUND MY FEAR REPLACED BY
ANNOYANCE. IN A WAY IT WAS AN
IMPROVEMENT.

HELL, I MIGHT HAVE SLEPT WELL THAT NIGHT IF ONE
OF MY PREDECESSORS HADN'T DECIDED TO ADD
A **REMINDER** THAT THIS COOL-AS-A-CUCUMBER
ACT WAS A LOAD OF CRAP.



THE ONLY TAPE THAT
CAPTURES **THE REAL** HIM,
IF ONLY FOR A MOMENT.



GIVE HIM THE
CHAIR!

JOKER SENTENCED.



HEY!

KILL
THAT FUCKING
MONSTER!

That



THERE HE WAS.

A MONSTER,
HUH?

HEH!

WE'RE ALL
MONSTERS IN A CIVILIZED
CAGE, IT JUST TAKES THE
RIGHT KIND OF PAIN AND
FEAR TO **BREAK
THE LOCK**.

SEEMS
YOU'RE ALMOST
THERE YOURSELF,
BUDDY.



JUST GIVE THOSE
BARS A GOOD
PUSH!

OUTSIDE
OF YOUR CAGE IS
MY GOTHAM.

IT IS THE
CITY OF MONSTERS!
AND IT'S AN HONEST
PLACE!

THE MAN ON THE STREET, HIS TONE OF
VOICE WAS COLD, LIKE SHATTERING
GLASS, LIKE **THAT NIGHT**.



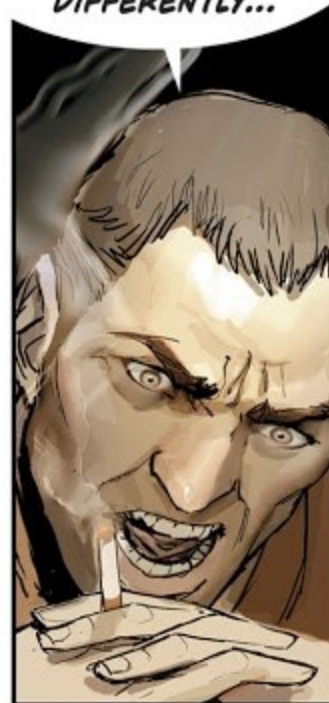
BUT, MORE THAN THAT, IT WAS WHAT HE SAID.

WE'RE ALL MONSTERS IN A CIVILIZED **CAGE**, IT JUST TAKES THE **RIGHT KIND OF PAIN** AND FEAR TO **BREAK THE LOCK**.

SEEMS YOU'RE ALMOST THERE YOURSELF, BUDDY.

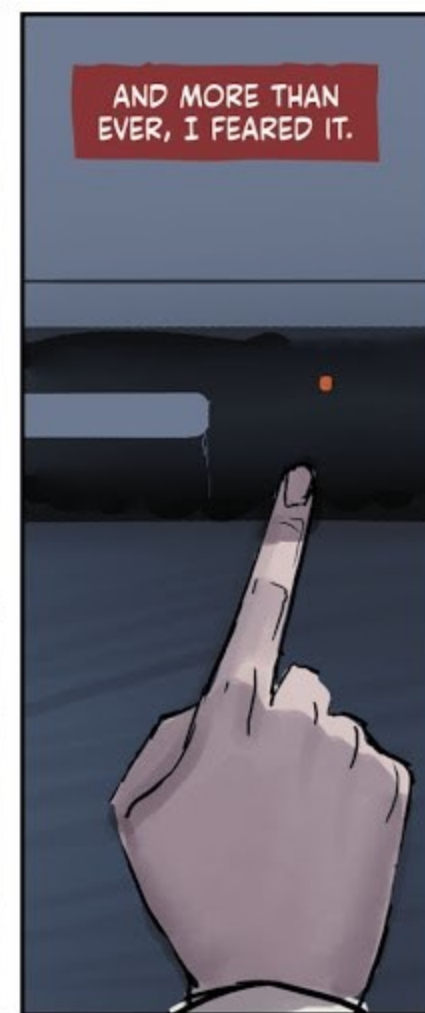


SO I BROKE **MY OATH** THAT DAY...BLEW HER BRAINS OUT...EMPTIED THE WHOLE DAMNED CLIP...SHIT LIKE THAT, IT SNAPS SOMETHING INSIDE OF YOU...YOU START SEEING THE WORLD **DIFFERENTLY...**



I **HAD** TO INTERVIEW HIM.

MORE THAN EVER, I KNEW THIS.



AND MORE THAN EVER, I FEARED IT.

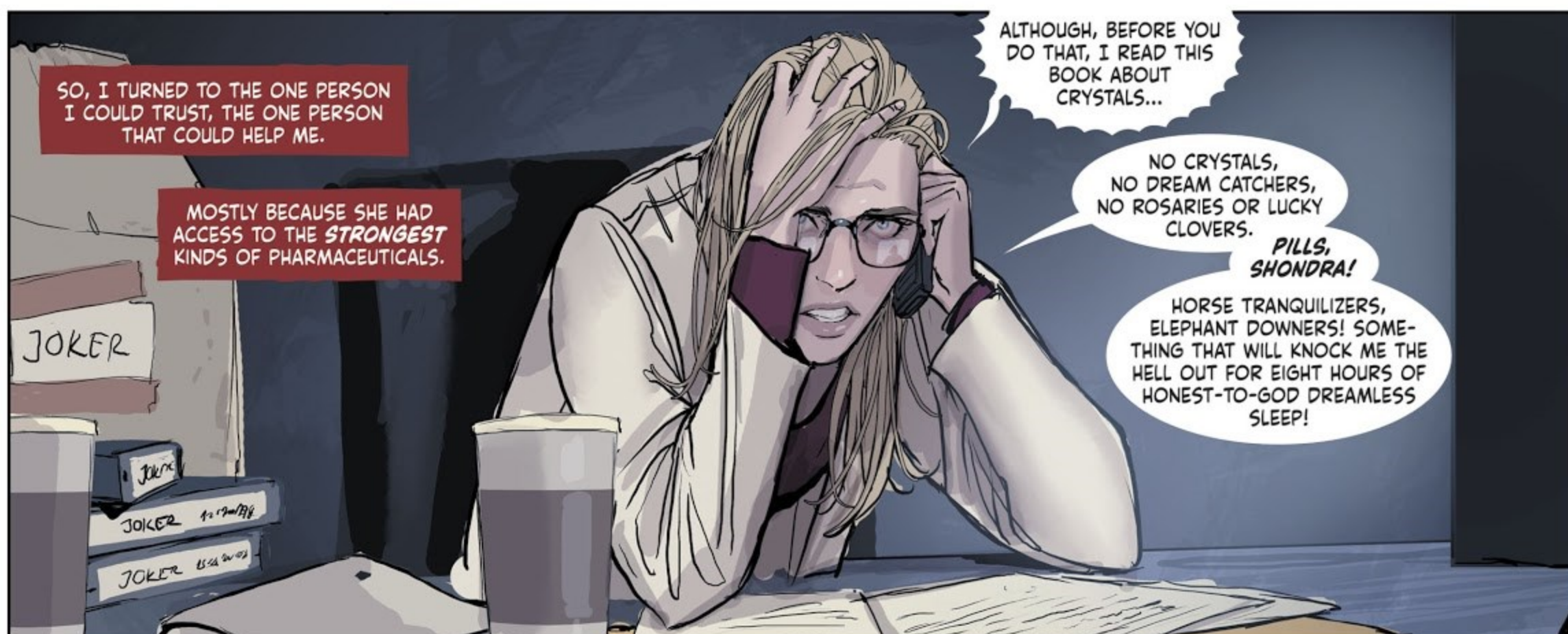


AND WITH THAT FEAR, AND ALL THE WEIGHT OF MY THOUGHTS, MY DREAMS WORSENE TO A LEVEL I THOUGHT **UNIMAGINABLE**.



I SWEAR, I WAS NEVER **DELUSIONAL**, BUT... THERE WERE MOMENTS WHEN I COULD ALMOST SEE **THE MIST** GATHER IN MY WAKING HOURS.

AND WHEN ANYONE LAUGHED, I **FLINCHED...**



SO, I TURNED TO THE ONE PERSON I COULD TRUST, THE ONE PERSON THAT COULD HELP ME.

MOSTLY BECAUSE SHE HAD ACCESS TO THE **STRONGEST** KINDS OF PHARMACEUTICALS.

ALTHOUGH, BEFORE YOU DO THAT, I READ THIS BOOK ABOUT CRYSTALS...

NO CRYSTALS, NO DREAM CATCHERS, NO ROSARIES OR LUCKY CLOVERS.

PILLS, SHONDRA!

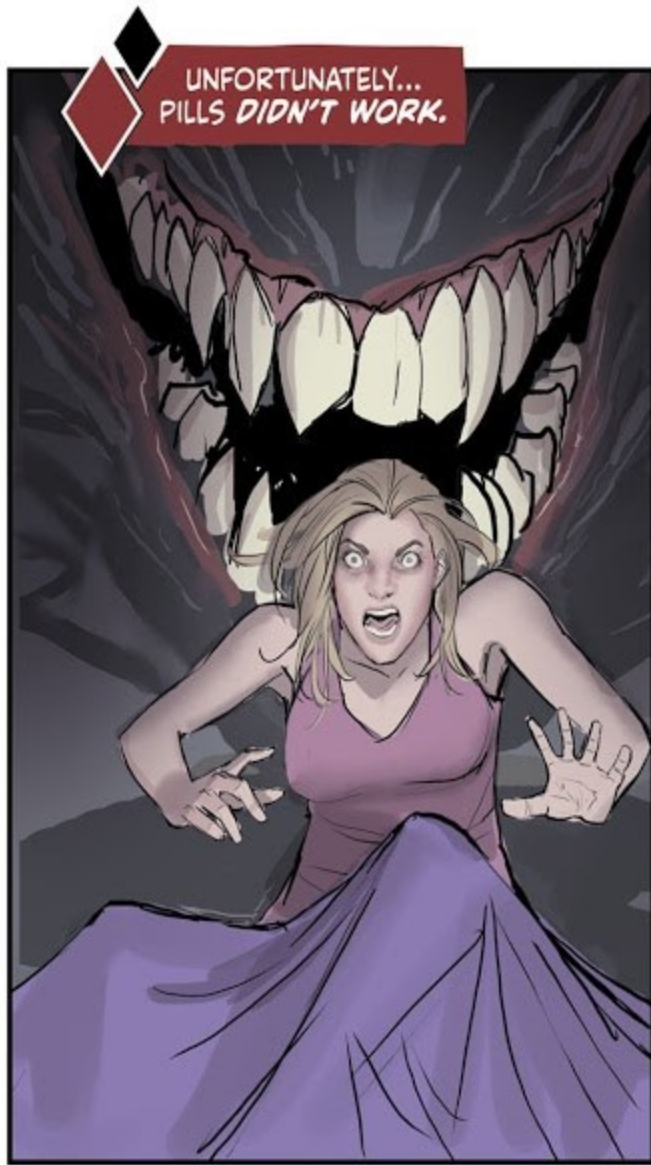
HORSE TRANQUILIZERS, ELEPHANT DOWNERS! SOMETHING THAT WILL KNOCK ME THE HELL OUT FOR EIGHT HOURS OF HONEST-TO-GOD DREAMLESS SLEEP!

JOKER

Joker

JOKER 12/20/18

JOKER 11/24/2018



UNFORTUNATELY...
PILLS *DIDN'T* WORK.



SO, I STARTED MY
OWN RESEARCH

NO SPICY
FOOD...



AGAIN...NADA.



MILK/HONEY/VINEGAR/
TWELVE DIFFERENT
KINDS OF TEA BEFORE
SLEEP...

NOPE.



A CHIROPRACTIC
ADJUSTMENT SOLVED
MY NIGHT TERROR
PROBLEMS...
HMM...



ZILCH. ALSO, BACK THEN, I
GENUINELY THOUGHT THAT WAS
THE MOST UNCOMFORTABLE
ORDEAL MY BONES AND
TENDONS WOULD EVER GO
THROUGH. **HAH!**



IN THE END, ONLY
ONE THING WORKED.



HEY, I SAID
IT **WORKED!**

NOT **HELPED!**



YES?

IN FACT, THIS WOULD HAVE
GONE ON FOR GOD KNOWS
HOW LONG IF IT WEREN'T
FOR THE PHONE CALL.



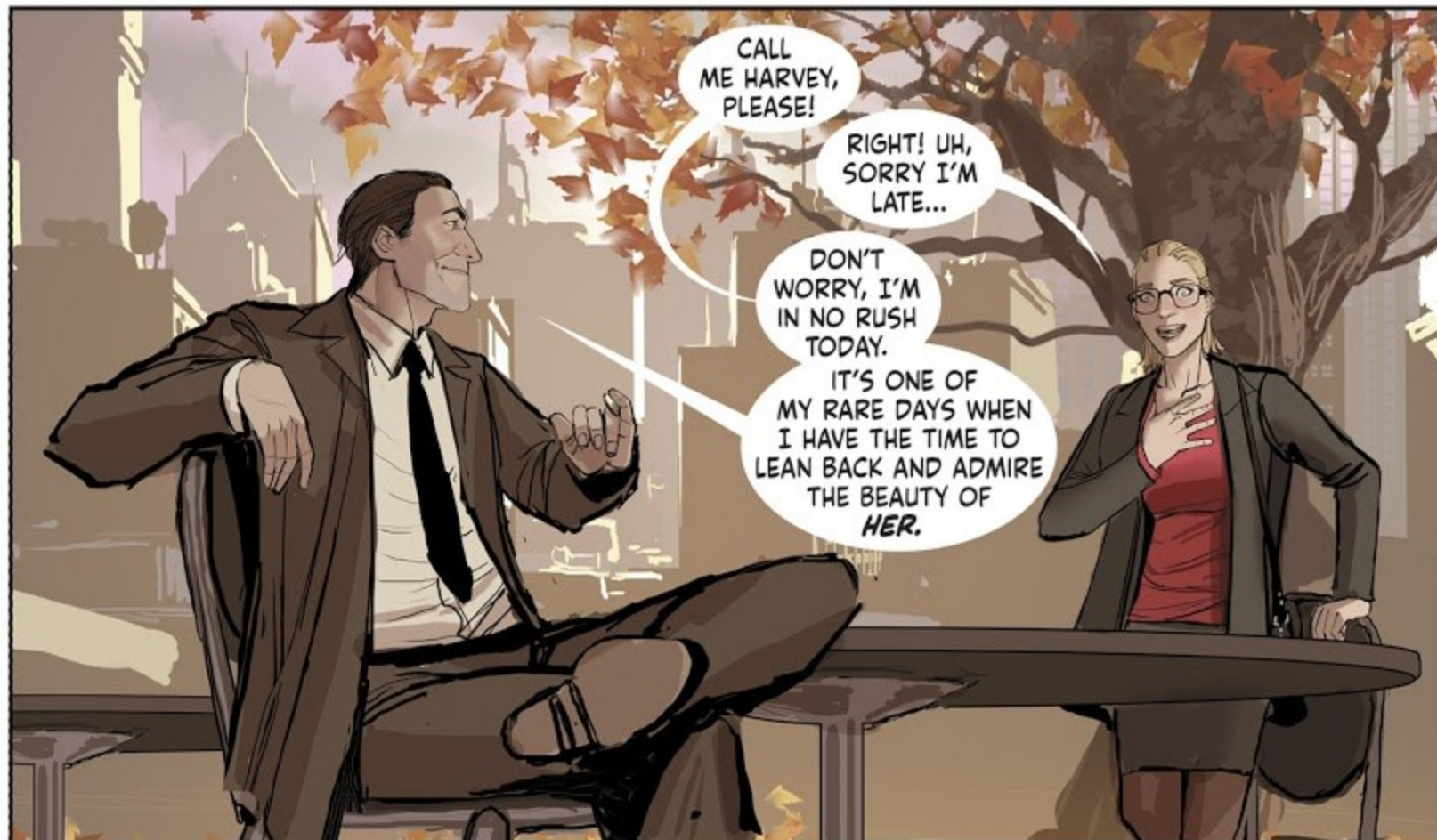
HE WANTS TO
MEET ME?
LIKE, IN
PERSON?

UHHH...
SEVEN IS FINE.
WAIT, DID YOU
SAY A.M.?



DR. QUINZEL!

OH, MR. DENT!

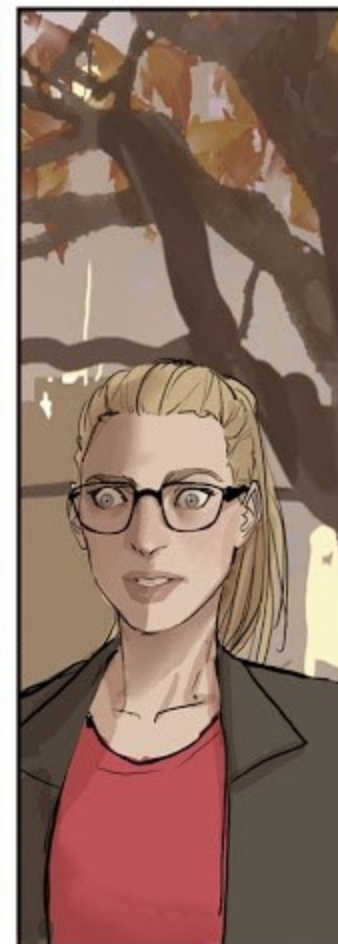


CALL ME HARVEY, PLEASE!

RIGHT! UH, SORRY I'M LATE...

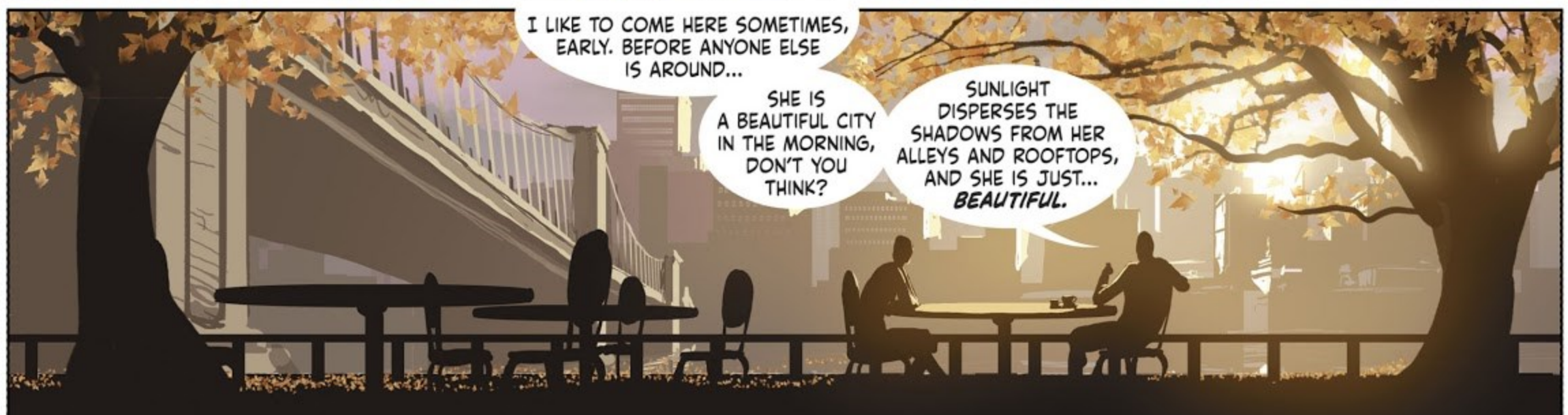
DON'T WORRY, I'M IN NO RUSH TODAY.

IT'S ONE OF MY RARE DAYS WHEN I HAVE THE TIME TO LEAN BACK AND ADMIRE THE BEAUTY OF *HER*.



GOTHAM.

AH.



I LIKE TO COME HERE SOMETIMES, EARLY. BEFORE ANYONE ELSE IS AROUND...

SHE IS A BEAUTIFUL CITY IN THE MORNING, DON'T YOU THINK?

SUNLIGHT DISPERSES THE SHADOWS FROM HER ALLEYS AND ROOFTOPS, AND SHE IS JUST... *BEAUTIFUL*.



UH... MR. DENT...



I WANT YOU TO REFUSE THE WAYNE GRANT.

WHA--



I'D ALSO LIKE YOU TO END YOUR RESEARCH.

EXCUSE YOU?!

BRUCE WAYNE IS...HE'S A **GOOD** MAN. HIS WHOLE LIFE, HE'S DONATED TO CAUSES LIKE YOURS, DESPERATELY TRYING TO UNDERSTAND THE **WHY** BEHIND THE MINDLESS VIOLENCE THAT BEFELL HIS FAMILY.



I FAIL TO SEE WHAT THAT HAS TO DO WITH MY RESEARCH! AND ALSO, WHAT GIVES **YOU** THE RIGHT--

LET ME FINISH, PLEASE.



SEE, BRUCE IMAGINES THE CRIMINALS OF THIS CITY AS **BROKEN**, BUT **FIXABLE**.

I ASSUME YOU SHARE THIS OUTLOOK IN THE SAME WAY I ONCE DID.



HOWEVER...

I'VE DEALT WITH THEM FOR LONG ENOUGH TO **KNOW BETTER**.



IN MY FIFTEEN YEARS AS A **PROSECUTOR**, I'VE WITNESSED **DEPTHS OF INHUMANITY** THAT WOULD MAKE HONEST PEOPLE OF GOTHAM **NEVER** LEAVE THEIR HOMES AGAIN.



MR. DENT, I'M SURE THIS LITTLE SPEECH GOES ON FOR A WHILE LONGER, BUT SINCE I SPEND MOST OF MY TIME THESE DAYS LISTENING TO THE SELF-AGGRANDIZING IDEOLOGIES OF PATIENTS IN ARKHAM, I'D RATHER NOT DO IT **HERE** AS WELL. COULD YOU GET TO **THE POINT**?



FINE. WHILE YOUR BOSS TRIED TO SLIP IT UNDER THE RADAR, ONE OF YOUR COWORKERS ANONYMOUSLY CALLED MY OFFICE AND INFORMED US ABOUT YOUR RESEARCH...



OH, I HAVE A DECENT ENOUGH IDEA OF **WHO** IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN...BUT DO GO ON.

AND WE'VE COME TO SEE YOUR WORK FOR WHAT IT IS.

A THREAT.



A THREAT TO THE VERY **NOTION** OF PROTECTING **LAW AND ORDER** IN GOTHAM.

RIGHT NOW, EIGHT OUT OF TEN OF THE **MOST-HARDENED** CRIMINALS ARE SITUATED NOT IN MAXIMUM SECURITY FACILITIES LIKE BLACKGATE, BUT IN **ARKHAM ASYLUM!**

THE BREAKOUT RATE THERE IS SO HIGH THE BLOODY PLACE MIGHT AS WELL HAVE REVOLVING DOORS INSTALLED!

YOU PUBLISH YOUR RESEARCH AND EVERY DEFENSE LAWYER LOOKING TO BUILD A CAREER WILL JUMP ON IT LIKE A **RABID DOG**, AND BEFORE YOU KNOW IT, EVERY TRIAL WILL BE NOTHING BUT LAWYERS TELLING SOME SOB STORY ABOUT HOW THEIR CLIENTS LOST THEIR ABILITY TO **FEEL EMPATHY**.





IF MY THEORY IS PROVEN **CORRECT--**



BIG IF!



OKAY, LISTEN, MR. DENT...I'M WELL AWARE IT WILL MAKE PROSECUTING PEOPLE A **MORE NUANCED** BUSINESS, YES.

BUT IT WILL RESULT IN A **SIGNIFICANTLY** GREATER REHABILITATION PERCENTAGE...



IT'S **CERTAINLY** BETTER THAN PROGRESSIVELY LONGER **INCARCERATIONS** THAT ONLY END UP MAKING THESE PEOPLE FIND THEIR ONLY SENSE OF COMMUNITY AMONG **OTHER CRIMINALS.**



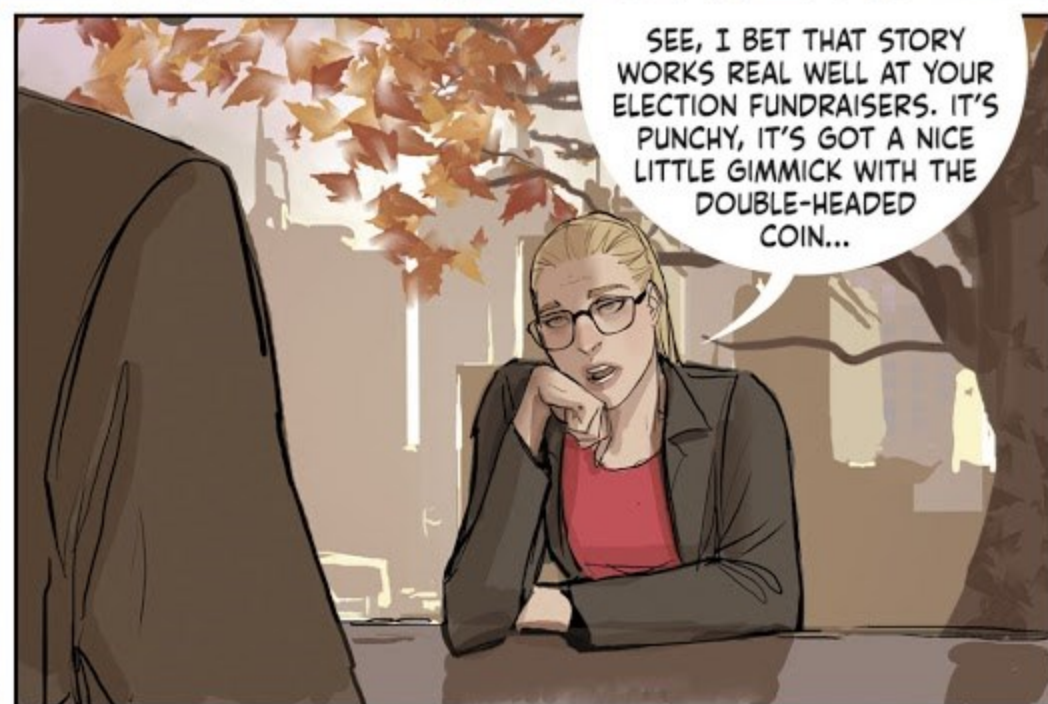
SEE THIS? IT'S A **DOUBLE-HEADED COIN.** HEADS ON **BOTH SIDES.**

IT WAS GIVEN TO ME BY A MOTHER WHOSE DAUGHTER WAS KILLED BY A PAROLED CRIMINAL.

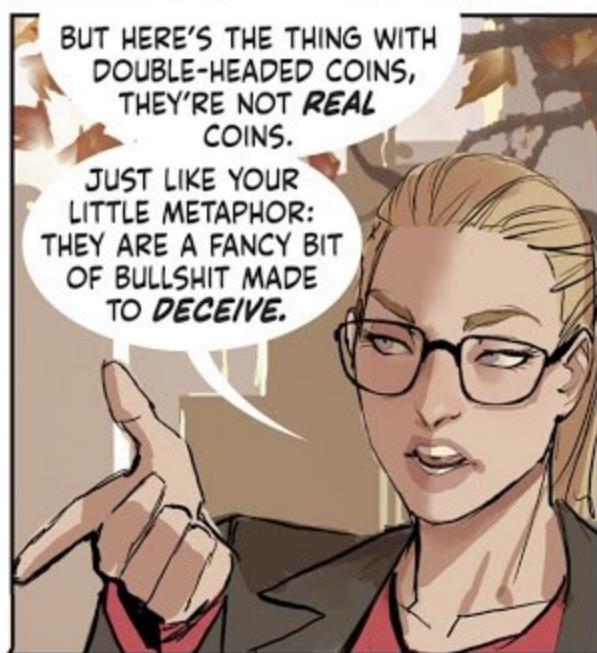
SHE SAID, "YOU TAKE THIS, MR. DENT. YOU KEEP IT AS A REMINDER.

"THESE **MONSTERS** WILL TRY TO CONVINCE YOU THEY **CHANGED** THEIR WAYS, THAT THERE IS A **GOOD SIDE** TO THEM, BUT THEY ARE LIKE THIS COIN.

"THEY MAY SPIN AND THEY MAY FLY, BUT WHEN THEY LAND, THEY'LL ONLY SHOW YOU MORE OF **THE SAME.**"



SEE, I BET THAT STORY WORKS REAL WELL AT YOUR ELECTION FUNDRAISERS. IT'S PUNCHY, IT'S GOT A NICE LITTLE GIMMICK WITH THE **DOUBLE-HEADED COIN...**



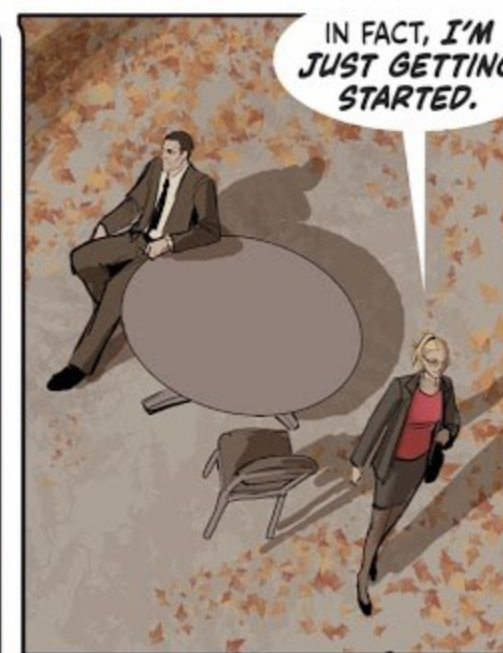
BUT HERE'S THE THING WITH **DOUBLE-HEADED COINS,** THEY'RE NOT **REAL COINS.**

JUST LIKE YOUR LITTLE METAPHOR: THEY ARE A FANCY BIT OF **BULLSHIT MADE TO DECEIVE.**



GET YOURSELF A **REGULAR OLD COIN,** MR. DENT.

IT MAY MAKE YOU SEE THE WORLD DIFFERENTLY. OH, AND I'M **NOT** BACKING OFF.



IN FACT, I'M **JUST GETTING STARTED.**



IT'S KINDA FUNNY...ALL OF OUR **BIG WORDS** AND **MORALIZING** AND YET WITHIN FIVE MONTHS WE WOULD BOTH BECOME **MURDERERS...**



THAT DAY, HOWEVER, WHILE NOT QUITE **MURDEROUS**, I DID EVER-SO-BRIEFLY ENTERTAINING SOME VIOLENT FANTASIES FEATURING THE ESTEEMED MR. DENT.

IT WAS THE SMUG TONE WITH WHICH HE SIMPLY **DEMANDED** I ABANDON MY WORK.

IT **INFURIATED** ME IN WAYS I NEVER THOUGHT POSSIBLE.



HE'S DOWN THE HALL. YOU CAN'T MISS IT.

WE KEEP HIM SEPARATED FROM THE REST OF THEM AS HE'S GOT A TENDENCY TO START SHIT.

AND SO, DRIVEN BY THIS RAGE AND BARELY SUPPRESSED TIDE OF PROFANITY ADDRESSED TO HARVEY DENT, I THREW ALL CAUTION TO THE WIND.

I HAD A JOB TO DO.

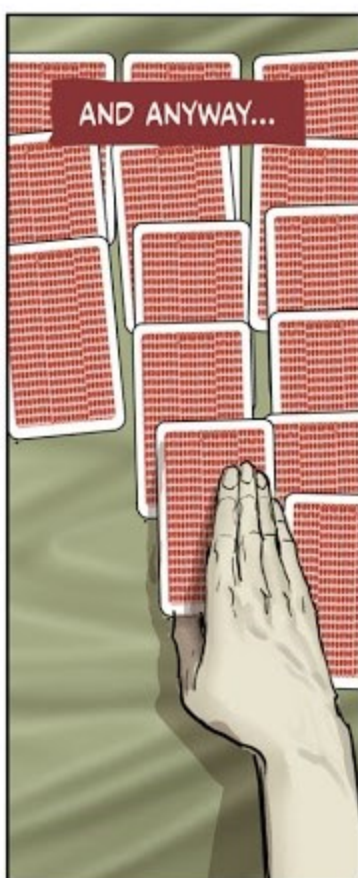


I MEAN, FOR ALL I KNEW HE COULD BE **THE ONE...**

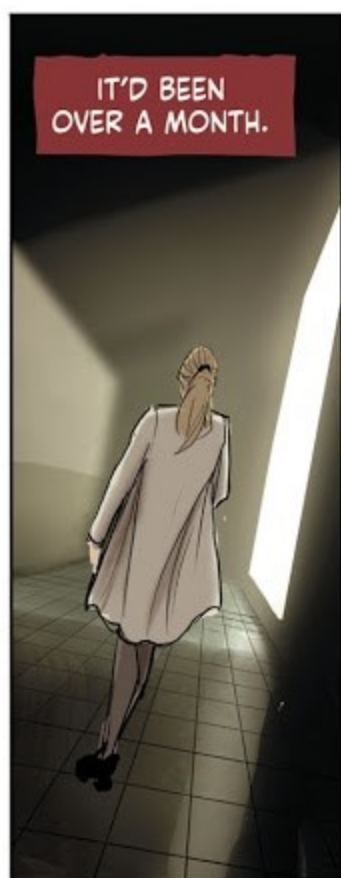
THE **PERFECT** CANDIDATE FOR MY STUDY.

CALL IF YOU NEED ME.

THANK YOU, MR. BRONSON.



AND ANYWAY...



IT'D BEEN OVER A MONTH.



SURELY HE WOULDN'T REMEMBER **ME**.



SO, WHICH ONE ARE YOU? ONE OF MY PREVIOUS ONES OR A **BRAND-NEW** BRAIN-TINKERER?



I CAN'T REALLY SEE YOU ALL THE WAY OVER THERE **IN THE DARK.**

COME CLOSER, I WON'T BITE.



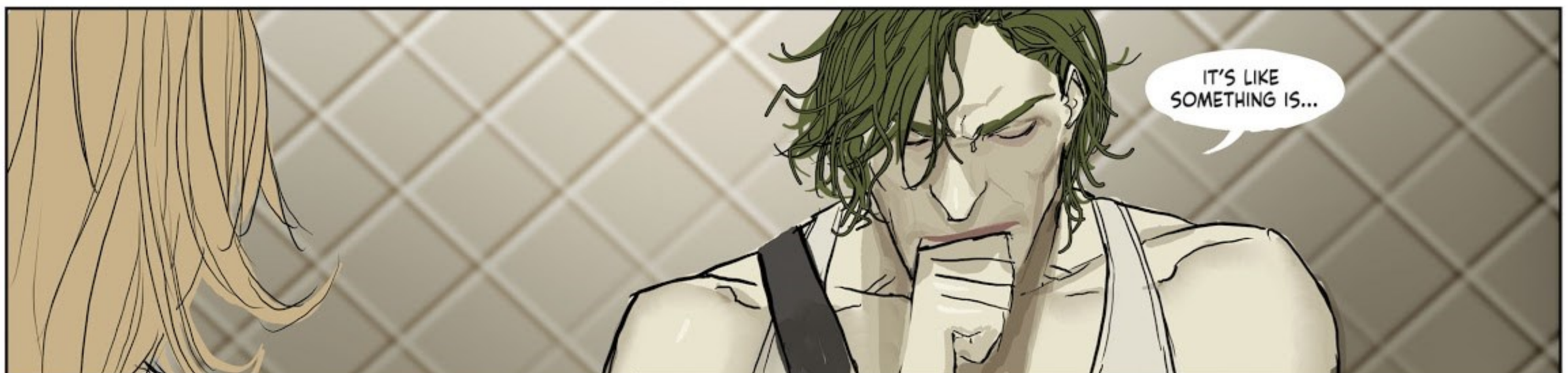
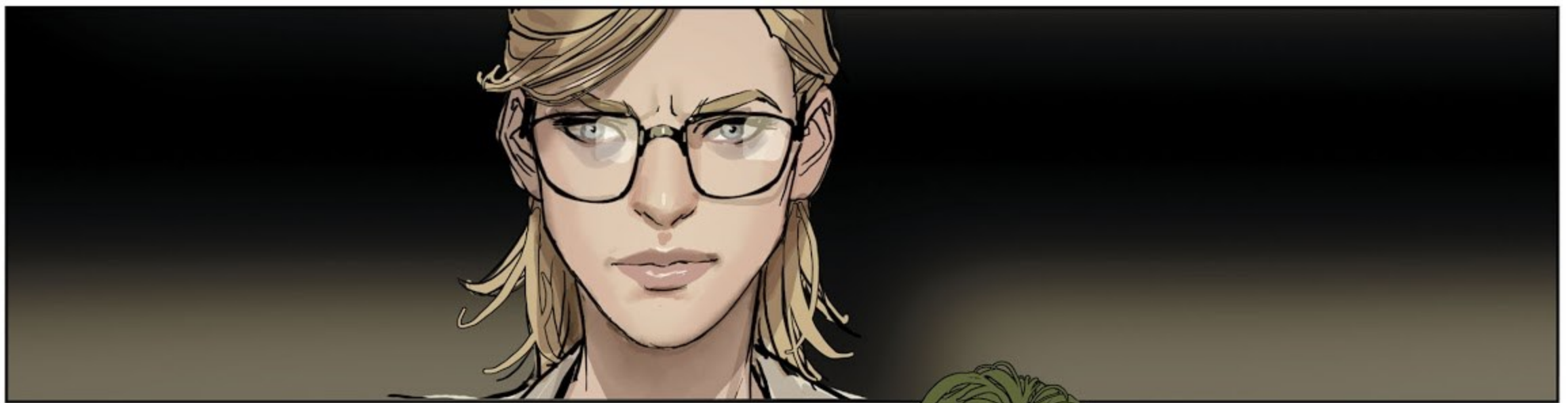
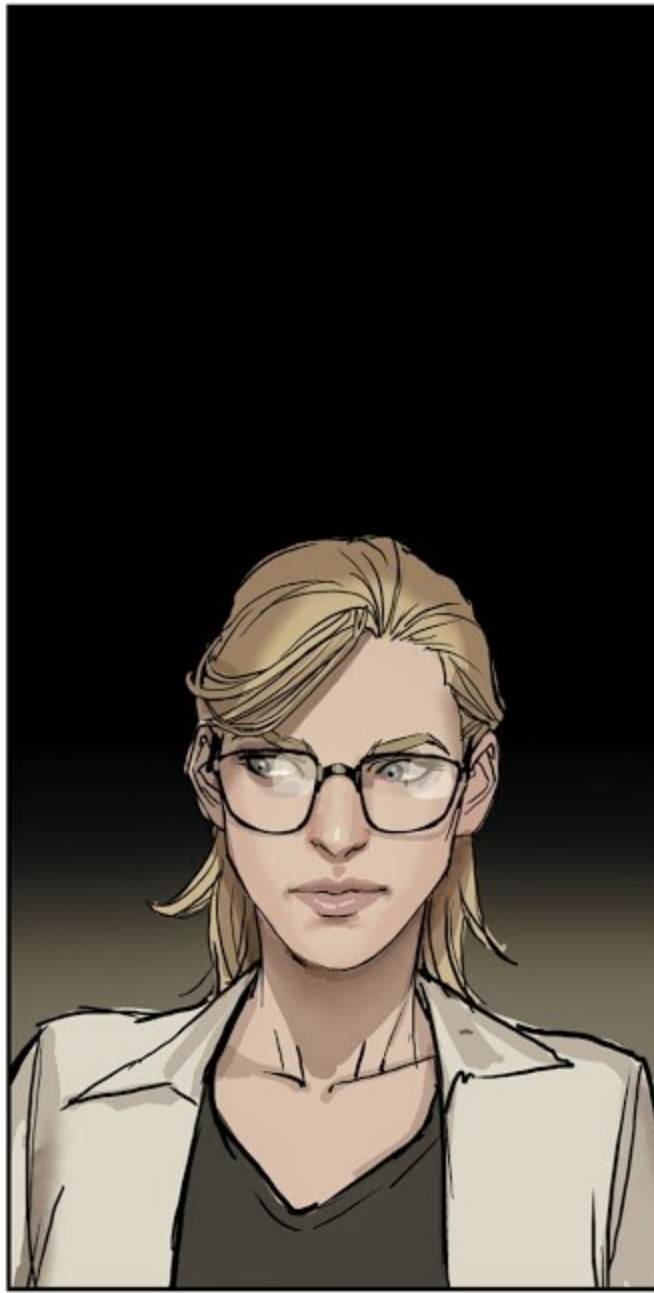
I MEAN, I **MIGHT** BUT...

KNOCK KNOCK

REINFORCED GLASS AND ALL.



I...
I AM **DR. HARLEEN QUINZEL**. I'VE BEEN ASSIGNED TO YOUR...UH... CASE.







YOU TELL ME! THAT'S WHY YOU'RE HERE, AFTER ALL: TO PICK THROUGH MY BRAIN, MAKE SENSE OF MY STORIES.

RIGHT...



THE STORIES.

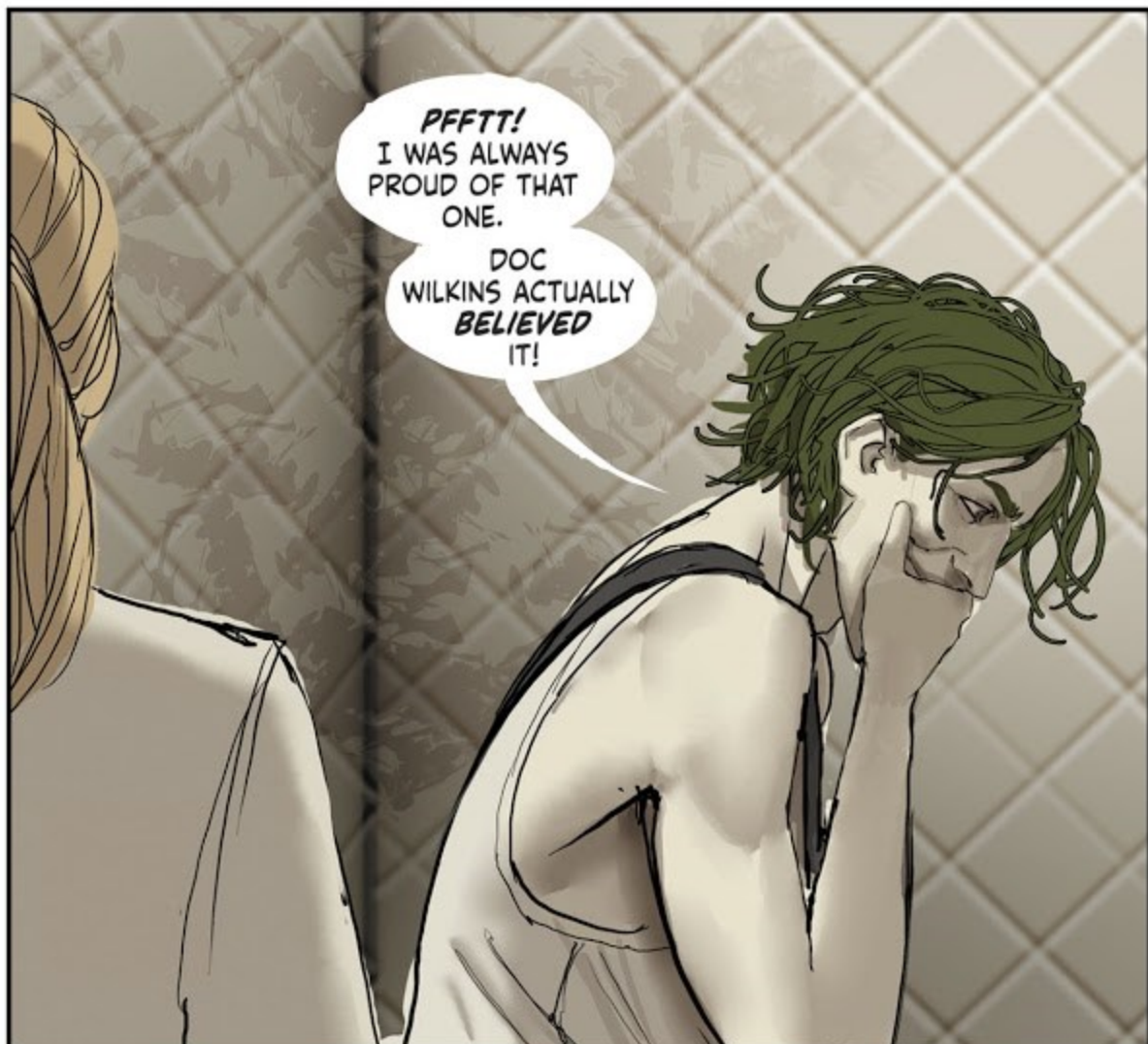
I'VE READ UP ON THEM.

AS IT TURNS OUT--ALL AT THE SAME TIME--

YOU WERE A RICH MOBSTER, THROWN INTO A VAT OF ACID, A FAILED COMEDIAN, ABUSED BY YOUR FATHER, MOTHER, BROTHER, AND...



A MATRON OF AN ORPHANAGE THAT DOUBLED AS A SWEATSHOP PRODUCING GOLF BALLS.



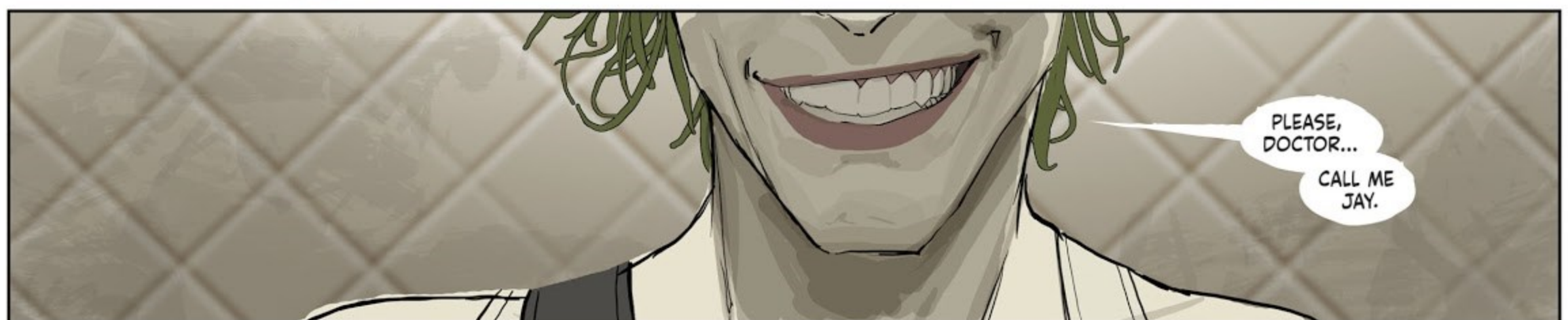
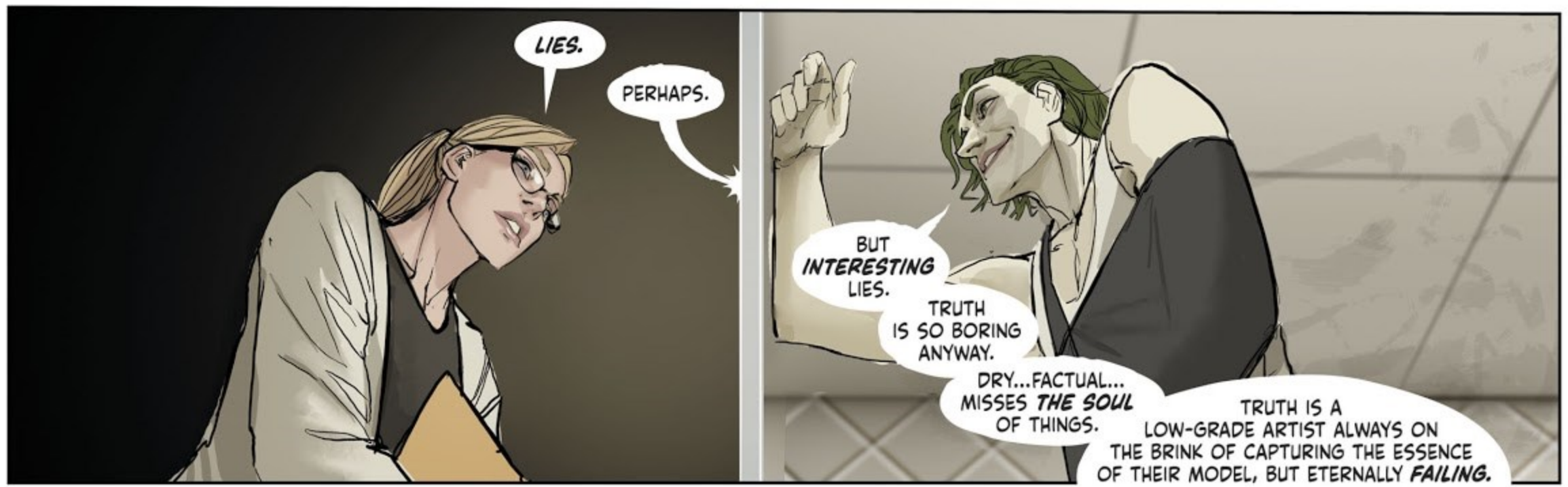
PFFTT! I WAS ALWAYS PROUD OF THAT ONE.

DOC WILKINS ACTUALLY BELIEVED IT!



BUT SEE, NOW YOU RUINED IT.

I COULD HAVE TOLD YOU STORIES LIKE THOSE AS WELL!



A woman with blonde hair in a ponytail, wearing glasses and a white lab coat, stands in a dark hallway. She is holding a yellow folder. On the wall behind her are two dark, elongated shadows. A bright light source from the right creates a strong beam of light across the floor and wall.

I REMEMBER THINKING,
*THIS IS FINE. I CAN
CONTROL THIS SITUATION.*

IT WAS NEITHER THE FIRST
NOR THE LAST TIME I WAS
WRONG ABOUT THAT.

VERY WELL,
MR. JAY.

END OF CHAPTER ONE



**"HEAVEN
HELP ME..."**

**"...A SMALL
PART OF ME..."**

**"...WANTS TO
LET HIM IN."**

HARLEEN

BOOK TWO - IN STORES OCTOBER

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**"THE ROAD TO
HELL
IS PAVED WITH
GOOD
INTENTIONS."**

**"ON THAT ROAD
I SAW A
PALE
MAN,**

**"AND HE
SMILED
AT
ME..."**

A BRILLIANT YOUNG PSYCHIATRIST WITH THE CURE FOR THE MADNESS OF GOTHAM, DR. HARLEEN QUINZEL, TAKES DRASTIC MEASURES TO SAVE THE CITY FROM ITSELF. WITNESS THE BIRTH OF THE LEGENDARY SUPER-VILLAIN HARLEY QUINN IN THIS STUNNING REIMAGINING OF HARLEY AND THE JOKER'S TWISTED AND TRAGIC LOVE AFFAIR BY ACCLAIMED STORYTELLER STJEPAN ŠEJIĆ (AQUAMAN: UNDERWORLD, SUNSTONE).

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